One Hundred and Seventy three

SERMONS

On Several

SUBJECTS

AND

OCCASIONS.

In TWO VOLUMES.

By *SAMUEL CLARKE*, D.D.
Late Rector of St. *James's*, *Weſtminſter*.

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To which is added,
A Compleat INDEX of the Texts of Scripture Preached upon; a Second *of the Texts occaſionally explained*; and a Third *of the Principal Matters contained in This and the foregoing Volume.*

By JOHN CLARKE, D.D. Dean of *Sarum.*

VOL. II.

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SERMON I.

Of the Sin againſt the HOLY GHOST.

[*Preached on Whitſunday.*]

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WE are met together this Day, thankfully to commemorate the greateſt and moſt important Gift, that was ever ſent down from Heaven upon the Sons of Men; the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt at Pentecoſt; that plentiful Effuſion of the Holy Spirit, which was the Accompliſhment both of the Predictions of all the *Antient* Prophets, and of all the *later* Promiſes made by our Saviour to his Diſciples; that Gift of Tongues, which was ſo peculiarly proper and neceſſary a *Means* to the great End for which it was deſigned, and the *Effects* whereof have been of ſuch univerſal Extent over the Face of the whole Earth. The Goſpel of *Chriſt*, was not, like the Religion of *Moſes*, to be confined to One Nation or People; but to be preached, as the general Doctrine of Salvation, to all Mankind: And the Gift of Tongues, wherewith the firſt Preachers of it were indued, was equally both a *neceſſary Means* to inable them to preach to all Nations, and a *ſtrong Proof* of the Truth of that Doctrine which they were ſo miraculouſly inabled to ſpread. 'Twas a *neceſſary Means*, without which

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the Goſpel could by no Labour whatſoever; no, not by the moſt indefatigable Induſtry, in compaſſing Sea and Land to make a Proſelyte; have in the Courſe of *many Ages* been propagated through ſo many different and ſo remote Countries, as by this means it was ſpread in the Space of *not many Years*. And at the ſame Time that it ſo *ſwiftly* conveyed the *Knowledge* of the Goſpel, 'twas likewiſe a *ſtrong Proof* of the *Truth* of the Doctrine it ſelf, both upon account of the *Greatneſs* of the Miracle in its own Nature, and the *Clearneſs* of the Evidence wherewith the Miracle was ſet forth. The *Greatneſs* of the Miracle in its own Nature, conſiſted in This; that it was worked upon *many Perſons*, at one and the ſame Time; that it was a Producing in them ſuch an Effect, as was equivalent to the Reſult of a *long Habit*; and that it was not a ſhort and tranſitory Effect, but of a *permanent Duration*; and in its *whole Continuance*, equally miraculous, as in the firſt Operation. Upon the whole therefore, 'twas ſuch a Miracle in all its Circumſtances, as there had been no Example of any like it before; and probably referred to by our Saviour in that Promiſe; *John* xiv, 12; *He that believeth on me; the works that I do, ſhall he do alſo, and greater Works than theſe ſhall he do.* The *Clearneſs of the Evidence* wherewith the Miracle was ſet forth, conſiſted in This; that Matters were ſo diſpoſed by the Wiſdom of Providence, that the bittereſt Enemies of the Apoſtles, did themſelves, by their own Teſtimony, remove the only Objections that could be brought againſt it. For, all that could poſſibly be alledged againſt the Truth of the Miracle, was, either that the New Tongues wherewith the Apoſtles began to ſpeak, were *not real Languages*; or, if they were, that then the Apoſtles, who ſpake them, had *ſtudied* and *been taught* thoſe *Languages* before. But now the former of theſe Suſpicions, was removed by the *Strangers* then preſent; and the latter was taken off, by the *Inhabitants of Jeruſalem* themſelves. The *Strangers* then preſent, who underſtood the Languages, took off that fooliſh Objection, *Acts* ii, 13; that the Apoſtles were *full of new Wine*; for they *heard* and underſtood them *ſpeaking in their* own *Tongues, the wonderful Works of God*; ver. 11. And the *Inhabitants of Jeruſalem* themſelves, removed the *other* Suſpicion, of their having been *taught* the Languages; for they knew them to be illiterate Men, and ſaid, *Are not all theſe, that ſpeak, Galileans?* ver. 7; juſt as they had formerly ſaid concerning Jeſus himſelf; *How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?* John vii, 14: And, *whence has this man theſe things? ——Is not this the Carpenter, and Son of Mary? the Brother of James and Joſes, and of Juda and Simon? and are not his Siſters here with us?* St. Mar. vi. 2. Both the *Strangers* therefore, and the *Inhabitants of Jeruſalem* themſelves, bore Teſtimony to the Truth of the Miracle, even at the ſame Time and with the ſame Arguments by which they oppoſed it; And they were of all Others the *beſt* and moſt *competent* Witneſſes, for that *very* Reaſon, becauſe they were *prejudiced* againſt the *Thing*, and *Enemies* to the *Men*. Beſides all which; the Miracle itſelf (as I before obſerved) was *permanent* in its *Continuance*, as well as *publick* in the *manner* of its being worked: So that in all reſpects, it was both the *Greateſt* in the *Nature* of the *Thing itſelf*, and the *Cleareſt* in the *Evidence* of its being *really performed*; that can poſſibly be imagined. To *Us* indeed, who live at This Diſtance of Time, the Evidence of a Fact done ſo many Ages ſince, cannot be ſo perfectly and entirely clear, as to thoſe who were themſelves Eye-Witneſſes and Ear-Witneſſes of it. But if there *are* Matters of Fact ſo atteſted, even at much *greater* Diſtances of Time, as that no reaſonable Perſon can in the leaſt queſtion the Truth of them; and *This*, of all other diſtant Facts that are recorded in any Hiſtory, has the greateſt and moſt remarkable Atteſtations; the Evidence of it even to *Us*, can with as little Reaſon be rejected, as that which was offered to thoſe very Perſons who lived at the Time. Nay, in *ſome* Reſpects, we may ſeem even to have the *Advantage* over them, in Point of Certainty of our not being deceived. For, beſides that we are Now free, from many of thoſe inveterate Prejudices, which both *Jews* and *Gentiles* then laboured under; and which we cannot aſſure our ſelves we ſhould leſs obſtinately have adhered to, than They did; We have moreover,

over, what They at that Time could not have; We have the concurrent *Examination* of *many Ages*, and the Advantage of conſidering and comparing the *Objections of Adverſaries* on all Sides; We have the *additional* Proofs, ariſing from the *continued Effects* of this miraculous Power, in different Times and Places; We have ſeen the Truth of the Apoſtles Doctrine confirmed, by the Accompliſhment of ſeveral Prophecies; by the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*; by the final Scattering of the whole Nation of the *Jews*; by the incredible Succeſs, and univerſal Propagation of the Goſpel, over all the World.

Now Theſe *additional* Confirmations of the Truth of the Doctrine delivered by the Holy Ghoſt in the Revelation of the Goſpel, are to *Us*; (what the Strength of the Evidence ariſing from the Nearneſs of the Time, was to *Them* who lived in the firſt Ages;) a proportionable *Aggravation* of the Guilt of Unbelief, in thoſe who, notwithſtanding all reaſonable Proof, yet obſtinately reject the Counſel of God againſt Themſelves, by *disbelieving* or (which is the ſame thing) *diſobeying* the Goſpel. For the Sin of Unbelief, does not conſiſt in *not believing* what men have *no* ſufficient Reaſon *to believe*; but in refuſing to attend to reaſonable Evidence; in being unwilling to examine into a Doctrine, which would oblige them to amend their Lives; in *hating the Light*, and fearing to come into it, *leſt their Deeds ſhould be reproved* thereby. *This is the Condemnation*, ſaith our Saviour, *that Light is come into the World, and men loved Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their Deeds were evil*; Joh. iii. 19. *They are of thoſe* (as *Job* elegantly expreſſes it) *who rebel againſt the* Light; *they know not the Ways thereof, nor abide in the Paths thereof*; ch. xxiv. 13. Upon *this* Account; (that *Knowledge*, or, which is all one,) the Means *of Knowledge* fairly propoſed to Men, is the great Aggravation of the Sin of Unbelief; ſhewing plainly, that in ſuch Caſe nothing but Obſtinacy and the Love of Sin, is the real Cauſe of their rejecting the Truth: Upon this Account, I ſay, it is, that our Saviour thus declares concerning the *Jews*, St *Joh.* xv. 22; *If I had not come, and ſpoke unto them, they had not had Sin; but now they have no cloke for their Sin:* and *ver.* 24; *If I had not done among them the Works which none other Man did, they had not had Sin; but now they have both ſeen, and hated both me and my Father.* And to the Cities, *wherein moſt of his mighty Works were done*; Matt. xi. 21; *Wo unto thee, Chorazin; Wo unto thee, Bethſaida, For if the mighty Works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in ſackcloth and Aſhes: But I ſay unto you, It ſhall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto Heaven, ſhalt be brought down to Hell; For if the mighty Works which have been done in Thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this Day; But I ſay unto you, that it ſhall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of Judgment, than for you.* And upon the ſame Ground it is, that the Apoſtle in like manner ſo highly aggravates the Sin of rejecting the Goſpel; *Heb.* xii. 25; *See that ye refuſe not him that ſpeaketh: For if They eſcaped not, who refuſed him that ſpake on Earth; much more ſhall not we eſcape, if we turn away from him that ſpeaketh from Heaven.* And *ch.* ii. 2; *If the Word ſpoken by Angels, was ſtedfaſt; and every tranſgreſſion and diſobedience received a juſt recompence of reward; How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation, which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him: God alſo bearing them witneſs, both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, according to his own Will.* A careful Conſideration of the Senſe of theſe Paſſages, will lead us to the true Meaning of the like, but more difficult, and ſeemingly more ſevere Expreſſions in the Text. For, if the great *Aggravation of Sin*, be the *Knowledge of our Duty*; and the *Condemnation of the World*, be the *Light that is come into it*; and the *Guilt of the Jews*, was proportionably greater than that of other Men, for *this* reaſon, becauſe our Saviour *did among them the Works which no other man did* elſewhere; and thoſe particular *Cities* of the *Jews*, wherein *moſt of* our Lord's *mighty Works were done*, were condemned with a more particularly ſevere judgment; and in general, *every* Sin

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The Occaſion of the Words, was This. Our Saviour having caſt out a Devil, and healed the diſeaſed Perſon, ſo that he who had been dumb and blind, immediately both ſpake and ſaw; the People, aſtoniſhed at the Greatneſs of the Miracle, began to expreſs their Opinion, that he muſt needs be the Meſſias, *ver.* 23; Upon which, certain Phariſees, hardened by their Malice and Hypocriſy beyond all Conviction, ſuggeſted to the People, that poſſibly it might be by Confederacy with the Prince of the Devils, that Jeſus thus caſt out Devils; *ver.* 24. To this our Saviour replies; Whatever is done by Confederacy with evil Spirits, muſt be ſomething that promotes the *Intereſt* of the Kingdom of Satan, and not any thing directly *contrary* thereto; unleſs a Kingdom can be ſupported by Diviſions within itſelf; *ver.* 25; *Every Kingdom divided againſt itſelf, is brought to Deſolation; and every City or Houſe divided againſt itſelf, ſhall not ſtand.* If therefore caſting out Devils, and that in Proof of a Doctrine directly *oppoſite* to the *Intereſt* of the Kingdom of Satan, be a thing

thing not to be done by Confederacy with Evil Spirits; than nothing, ſays he, can be more abſurdly malicious, than this your Accuſation of me; *ver.* 26; *If Satan caſt out Satan, he is divided againſt himſelf; how then ſhall his Kingdom ſtand?* But if the thing itſelf be apparent; and ye cannot without extreme Unreaſonableneſs, and the utmoſt Degree of Malice, deny it, that what I do, is by the immediate Power of God; then here is a convincing Proof offered you, that I am truly ſent from God, and that the Doctrine I preach is for the eſtabliſhment of *His* Kingdom; *ver.* 28; *But if I caſt out Devils by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you.* For, as one's entring into a ſtrong Man's Houſe, and forcibly diſpoſſeſſing him of his Goods, is an evident Demonſtration, that he who ſo enters, is ſtronger and comes with greater Authority, than he that had the firſt Poſſeſſion: So my breaking the Power of Devils by caſting them out of the Bodies, and deſtroying their Dominion over the Minds of Men, is an undeniable Proof of my being ſent by a Power and Authority greater than theirs; *ver.* 29; Or *elſe how can one enter into a ſtrong man's houſe and ſpoil his goods, except he firſt bind the ſtrong man, and then he will ſpoil his goods?* The connexion of the following Words, *ver.* 30, is more difficult to be underſtood; for they may ſeem at firſt ſight to be abrupt, and independent on what went before; *He that is not with me, is againſt me; and he that gathereth not with me, ſcattereth abroad*: But the true intent of them, is, to illuſtrate and confirm what went before, in ſome ſuch Manner as This: When two great Powers are at [open and] irreconcileable Enmity againſt each other, even he who *only forbears* joining with one ſide, is thereupon reputed to be againſt it; according to the uſual Proverb, *He that is not with me, is againſt me*: How much more therefore (infers our Saviour) ought ye to believe that *I*, who have actually done *ſo much* towards deſtroying the Power and Kingdom of the Devil, am really and in Truth acting in oppoſition againſt him, and not by confederacy with him! And then he adds in the Words of the Text; Wherefore *I ſay unto you, All manner of Sin and Blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven unto men; but the Blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt, ſhall not be forgiven unto men.* The meaning is: Since it is as evident, as it is poſſible for any thing to be, that the Works which I do, are by the immediate Authority of God, and by the Power of his Holy Spirit; *Therefore* whoſoever ſhall reſiſt this great Conviction, by ſo unreaſonable and obſtinate a degree of Malice, as to aſcribe theſe very Works, theſe greateſt and higheſt Evidences of Divine Authority, to the Power of the Devil; To ſuch a Perſon God will never afford any further Means of Conviction: And therefore though all other Blaſphemies and all *particular* Sins whatſoever, may be repented of and forgiven; yet He who is guilty of *this Total* corruption of Mind, this maliciouſly perverſe and deſperate Rejecting of the greateſt and higheſt Conviction that God vouchſafes to afford men, ſhall never have granted him any further Means, of Repentance and Forgiveneſs. Every particular Kind, or Sort of Sin, whatſoever; and all other *Blaſphemies* whatſoever, ſhall be forgiven men: Even he that ſpeaks againſt *Me*, (ſays our Lord,) in all *other* reſpects; or calumniates *me*, upon any *other* account whatſoever; and is not at firſt convinced by *my* Preaching and Exhortations; may yet afterwards be convinced by the mighty *Works* he ſhall ſee, and by the *Power* of the *Holy Ghoſt*; and ſo repent and be forgiven: But he who obſtinately reſiſts even this greateſt and moſt extraordinary Method, which God has thought fit to make uſe of for the Converſion of Mankind; and maliciouſly reviles the moſt evident Operations of the Spirit of God; ſuch a One has no further Means left, by which he might be convinced and brought to Repentance, and conſequently he can never be forgiven. *Whoſoever ſpeaketh a Word againſt the Son of Man, it ſhall be forgiven him; but whoſoever ſpeaketh againſt the Holy Ghoſt, it ſhall not be forgiven him, neither in this World, neither in the World to come.*

THE Connexion and *general* Meaning of the Words being thus explained, I ſhall for the further and more *particular* clearing of what Difficulties may

SERM. I. remain in them, and for removing ſuch Scruples as may be apt to ariſe from them, take leave to add the following Obſervations; 1ſt, That Our Saviour does not ſay, *The* Sin *againſt the Holy Ghoſt*, but *the* Blaſphemy *againſt the Holy Ghoſt*, ſhall not be forgiven. Neither in *This*, nor in any *other* Paſſage of Scripture, is there *any* mention *at all* of a Sin *againſt the Holy Ghoſt*. For indeed our Saviour is not here ſpeaking of *a Sin*, of a particular *Act of Sin*; ſeeing on the contrary he expreſsly declares, that *All Manner of Sin*, nay and all Blaſphemy *alſo wherewith ſoever* men *ſhall blaſpheme*, ſhall *be forgiven unto them*; But he ſpeaks of a certain incurable *malicious Diſpoſition of Mind*, which by venting itſelf under ſuch peculiar Circumſtances in Blaſphemy againſt the *greateſt* of our Lord's Miracles, plainly diſcovered itſelf to be incapable of Amendment, by *any* Means which God would vouchſafe to make uſe of. And it was not the *particular Act of Blaſpheming*, that itſelf rendered the Men unpardonable; But *That* particular *Blaſphemy*, in *thoſe* particular Circumſtances, was a *Sign* only or an *Evidence*, which our Saviour knew and declared to proceed from an *incurable* and therefore *unpardonable* malicious Diſpoſition of Mind. And This is evident from the Words immediately following the Text, whoſe *connexion* uſually is not ſufficiently taken Notice of. For thus, when our Saviour had declared the *Phariſees* Blaſpheming againſt the Holy Ghoſt, to be *unpardonable*; he adds, as a *Reaſon*, in the very next Words, *ver.* 33; *Either make the Tree good, and his Fruit good; or elſe make the Tree corrupt, and his Fruit corrupt: For the Tree is known by his Fruit. O Generation of Vipers, how can ye, being evil, ſpeak good things? For out of the Abundance of the Heart, the Mouth ſpeaketh.* It is evident therefore, that not for the particular *Act* of Blaſphemy, but for That *incurable wicked Diſpoſition of Mind*, of which Blaſpheming in thoſe Circumſtances was a plain Indication, were theſe *Phariſees* declared to be unpardonable. Nothing therefore can be gathered from this paſſage, concerning any particular *Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt*, (as Many have without Reaſon imagined,) in its own Nature unpardonable. For in reality *All wilful* Sin *whatſoever* is *againſt the Holy Ghoſt*; againſt the good Motions, againſt the guidance and direction of the good Spirit of God; Yet not *every*, nay not *any* wilful Sin is upon that Account abſolutely unpardonable; as appears from the whole Tenour of Scripture: Much leſs are blaſphemous *Thoughts*, which melancholy pious perſons are apt to complain of, and which therefore are not wilful at all; much leſs (I ſay) are uneaſy blaſphemous Thoughts, of This higheſt Malignity; when, generally ſpeaking, they are not ſo much as *choſen* or *wilful* Sins *at all*. Even thoſe *wilful* Sins *againſt* or in oppoſition to *the Holy Ghoſt*, (which yet is a Phraſe never uſed in Scripture-language,) are in the Goſpel always ſuppoſed pardonable upon true Repentance. The Blaſphemy our Saviour here ſpeaks of, is a thing of another Nature; it is not ſingly ſinning *againſt the Perſon of the Holy Ghoſt*, or *againſt his* good Motions, but preſumptuouſly *reviling* the greateſt *Works* of the Holy Ghoſt, and ſo obſtinately *rejecting* the laſt and ſolemneſt Call to Repentance. And This is further evident from what our Saviour adds, that *he who ſpeaks againſt the Son of Man*, might *be forgiven*; As the *Jews*, who reproached him as being *the Carpenter's Son*, as *a wine-bibber and a glutton*, as a *Friend of Publicans and Sinners*, might be forgiven, if they repented upon the further Conviction that ſhould afterwards be afforded them: But he that blaſphemed againſt the *Holy Ghoſt*, againſt the higheſt Evidence of our Lord's *greateſt* Miracles, was never to be forgiven; Not becauſe even *This was in itſelf*, and in the Nature of the Thing, abſolutely unpardonable; (For no reaſon can be given why ſpeaking againſt the *Perſon* of the *Holy Ghoſt*, ſhould be *in itſelf* of greater Malignity, than ſpeaking againſt *Chriſt*, or againſt *God the Father Himſelf*;) but becauſe it was an obſtinate rejecting the laſt means of Conviction, and an evident Token of incorrigible Malice. Among the Antient *Jews*, Heb. x. 28; *He that deſpiſed Moſes's* Law, *died without Mercy*: Our Saviour in like manner declares, that

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he who by blaſpheming againſt the Works of the Holy Spirit, deſpiſes and rejects the final Offer of *the Goſpel*, he alſo ſhall periſh without Mercy. And This poſſibly may be the meaning of the other Phraſe; that ſuch a malicious Temper ſhould not be pardoned, *neither in this World, neither in the World to come*; namely, neither in that preſent Age, which was the Time of the *Law*, nor in the Age to come, which is the Times of the *Meſſiah*. *2dly*, It is reaſonable to ſuppoſe that this peremptory declaration of our Saviour, concerning the unpardonable Wickedneſs of thoſe who thus blaſphemouſly rejected the higheſt Evidence of the Goſpel, ought to be applied and underſtood of *thoſe Perſons* only, who themſelves *ſaw* his Miracles, and rejected them purely out of a wicked Diſpoſition; namely, the *Phariſees*, and unbelieving *Jews*. For, though thoſe who live in after Ages, and are not Eye-witneſſes of his mighty Works, have indeed nevertheleſs ſufficient Evidence of the Truth of the Goſpel; and in ſome few reſpects, as I before intimated, have even the Advantage over the greater Part of thoſe who lived at That Time; yet, Theſe Advantages ariſing from Arguments of Abſtract Reaſon, Conſideration, and Enquiry; which work differently upon Men at different Times; and may prevail afterwards, upon more mature Conſideration, over the ſame Perſon who at preſent rejects them; therefore no man's rejecting the Goſpel Now, can be known or ſuppoſed to proceed from the like incurable Malignity, as the Blaſphemy of thoſe who themſelves *ſaw* our Lord's Miracles. *3dly*, It may yet further be conceived, not without probability, that theſe ſevere Words of our Saviour, are applicable, not even ſo much as to all *All* Thoſe *Phariſees*, who ſaw and rejected his Miracles; but to thoſe only, who ſaw *That* particular *great Miracle* recorded in This chapter, and who reviled it with *That* particular *malicious Blaſphemy*, of aſcribing it to the Power of the Unclean Spirit. For ſo St. *Mark* intimates, by adding in the Words immediately following the Text: *Mar.* iii 30; that Jeſus ſpake thus ſeverely of them, becauſe *they ſaid, he hath an unclean Spirit*. And indeed, ſince we do not find that any Perſons whatſoever were ever rejected from Baptiſm; it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that many of the *other Phariſees*, who had *ſeen* and perhaps alſo *ſpoken againſt* our Saviour's Miracles, might yet afterwards repent, be baptized, and obtain forgiveneſs. But *Theſe*, who blaſphemed in This *particular* manner, he *knew* were *incorrigible*, and perhaps *judicially* alſo reſolved that no farther Means ſhould be offered them. And then the Words of the Text will be prophetical, and equivalent to thoſe other Expreſſions; *Joh.* x. 26; viii. 21, 24; *Ye are none of my ſheep, ye ſhall die in your Sins*: which is the ſame as to ſay; *Ye will never be forgiven, neither in this World, neither in the World to come*. *4thly*, If this Threatning is to be extended to any *other* Perſons, it may ſeem moſt properly to reach the caſe of ſuch, as, after the giving of the Holy Ghoſt at *Pentecoſt*, ſhould in like manner revile that miraculous Diſpenſation. But there is no reaſon to think (as ſome have done,) that it belongs *only* to ſuch as ſhould blaſpheme *after That*: For the Power of the Holy Ghoſt did as viſibly appear to the *Phariſees* with whom our Saviour Now converſed, as to thoſe who ſaw that wonderful gift at *Pentecoſt*; and the Words themſelves ſeem *more naturally* to confine it to *thoſe Phariſees only*: At leaſt, it can be applied to Both, *only* upon account of their *ſeeing* the Miracles; which was the higheſt Evidence that could poſſibly be given them. And if there had been any ſuch thing as any *other* Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, which Chriſtians in after-times could be in danger of falling into; it cannot be imagined, but the Apoſtles in their Epiſtles, wherein they are diligent to caution men againſt all *other* Crimes, would have been much fuller and more preſſing in their Warnings to take heed of *This*, as being of more deſperate Conſequence than any *other* whatſoever: Whereas, on the contrary, we find not in their Writings any direct mention of any ſuch Sin at all. *5thly* and *Laſtly*, Yet This we may obſerve, that the Apoſtles frequently warn Men to take heed of the *Approaches* towards the like Guilt, and of Sins which may ſeem next in Malignity; ſuch as wilful Apoſtacy

SERM. I.

SERM. I. from the Profeſſion, or from the whole Practice of Religion; Concerning Perſons guilty of which Crimes it is ſaid, that it is *impoſſible* [exceeding difficult] *to renew them to Repentance*; that there *remains no more Sacrifice for* their *Sin*, Heb. x. 26, -.— 29; that like *Eſau*, they *for one morſel ſell* their *birth-right*; and, when it is joined with obſtinacy, that their *Sin* is *unto Death*, i. e. that it is like a Diſeaſe which appears to be *mortal*, with little or no Hopes of Recovery. From which God of his infinite Mercy &c.

SERMON II.

SERMON II.

Of Receiving the HOLY GHOST.

[*Preached on Whitſunday.*]

ACTS xix, 2, 3.

He ſaid unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghoſt ſince ye believed? And they ſaid unto him, We have not ſo much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghoſt. And he ſaid unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized?

SERM. II.

IN the following Diſcourſe upon theſe Words, I ſhall *firſt* endeavour briefly to explain the full Meaning of the ſeveral *particular* Expreſſions here made uſe of by the Apoſtle, and by the new Converts with whom he diſcourſed; and then, *ſecondly*, I ſhall conſider the *general* doctrine, concerning the Nature and Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which was the Foundation and Occaſion of the *particular* Incidents referred to in the Text. It was the Method of the Apoſtles, when they had preached the Goſpel in a Number of Places, to return after a certain Time through the ſame Places where they had formerly preached; to confirm, and ſtrengthen the Believers; to ſet in order, the ſeveral Churches; to redreſs what was amiſs; to exhort and comfort them, under the Perſecutions they were likely to meet with; and to examine how far they preſerved pure and uncorrupt, That Doctrine which had been delivered unto them, with regard both to Faith and Practice. *Acts* xv, 36. *Paul ſaid unto Barnabas, Let us go again and viſit our Brethren, in every City where we have preached the word of the Lord, and ſee how they do.* Ver. 41. *And he went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches.* And ch. xvi, 5. *And ſo were the Churches eſtabliſhed in the Faith, and increaſed in Number daily.* The Text, with the foregoing and following Verſes, is an account of part of this Progreſs of St. *Paul* in viſiting the Churches, and of the Deſign and Effect of that his Journey amongſt them. *Paul having paſſed through the upper coaſts, came to Epheſus*, ver. 1. *And finding certain Diſciples, he ſaid unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghoſt ſince ye believed?* As the Apoſtles were themſelves baptized with the Holy Ghoſt at *Pentecoſt*, ſo it pleaſed God at the *firſt preaching of the Goſpel*, generally to endue *others* likewiſe, who were baptized

SERM. II. by the Apoſtles, with ſome viſible Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, ſuch as ſpeaking with Tongues, Propheſying, and the like. Not that this was the principal and moſt valuable Effect of Baptiſm; For *That* conſiſted in the *internal* Benefit on the Mind of the Perſons *themſelves*, Remiſſion of paſt Sin, and Sanctification of the Spirit for the future: But in order to a more effectual Conviction of *Others* to whom the Goſpel was to be preached, and for the ſpeedier propagating of the Doctrine of Chriſt, it pleaſed God that the Power of the Holy Ghoſt in Them who were baptized, diſcovered itſelf in thoſe firſt times by *external* Evidences and miraculous Operations: *Tongues*, ſays the Apoſtle, *are for a Sign, not for them that believe, but for them that believe not*; 1 Cor. xiv, 22. Though therefore theſe miraculous Effects of the Spirit conferred in Baptiſm, were not the *principal* with regard to the Perſons *themſelves* on whom they were conferred; yet being the moſt *viſible* to *others*, and at that Time generally attending the other more ſecret and invifible Gifts, it was very natural for the Apoſtle, when he came to examine into the State of ſuch Diſciples as had been converted in his abſence, to expreſs himſelf after this manner, *Have ye received the Holy Ghoſt ſince ye believed?* The Matter he was chiefly concerned to know, was the *thing ſignified*; whether they were true Believers, and had received the Goſpel in the Truth and Purity thereof. But the thing demanded in his Queſtion, was the *Evidence* or *external Sign*; Has God beſtowed upon you thoſe viſible Gifts of the Spirit, which are now the uſual Characteriſticks of the Diſciples of Chriſt? To this Queſtion, they returned a very ſurprizing Anſwer indeed, if our Tranſlation expreſt it rightly; *We have not ſo much as* heard *whether there* be *any Holy Ghoſt*: As if any either *Jew* or even *Gentile*, much leſs Chriſtian Convert, could poſſibly have been ſo ignorant, as to know nothing at all, nor ever have heard any thing, either of the Being or Influences of the Spirit of God. The Meaning evidently is, (and ſo the Words ought to have been rendred,) *We have not heard that there has been any* ſuch Giving *of the Holy Ghoſt*; We have neither received any of theſe extraordinary Gifts *ourſelves*, nor been informed of their being beſtowed on *others*, or that we were to *expect* any ſuch thing upon our believing. And indeed it may ſeem very wonderful, how it ſhould happen they *could* be even *ſo far* ignorant as This. But *the reaſon* appears, in what follows. For when the Apoſtle hereupon asks them again; *Unto what then were ye baptized*, if not unto the Expectation of the Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt? they reply, ver. 3; *Unto John's Baptiſm*. Which Baptiſm of *John the Baptiſt* being *preparatory* only to the Reception of Chriſt, and intended only as a *Means* to a further *End*; 'tis no wonder it was not accompanied with the Effuſion of thoſe perfective Gifts of the Spirit, which would have made needleſs that Baptiſm into the Name of Chriſt, which was to follow. This therefore is the Meaning of what the Apoſtle thereupon anſwers them again, ver. 4; *John* (ſays he) *verily baptized with the Baptiſm of Repentance; ſaying unto the people, that they ſhould believe on* Him *which ſhould come after him, that is, on Chriſt Jeſus*. The Intention of which Reply is; *John indeed baptized you* (ſaith he) *into the* expectation *of the Meſſiah that was to come*; But before you enjoy the Benefit of his *actual Coming*, you muſt verify that *Expectation* by *receiving* him now he *is come*; and fulfil the *Intention* of *John's* Baptiſm, by being conſequently baptized into the Name of *Chriſt*. *John's* Baptiſm was but a *Promiſe* or Declaration of your *Intention*, of being afterwards baptized into *Chriſt*; And the Advantage you expect from being baptized by *John*, can be made good to you only by *fulfilling* that Promiſe, in embracing the Doctrine and the Religion of *Chriſt*. *When they heard This*, ver. 5. *they were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jeſus; And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghoſt came on them, and they ſpake with tongues and propheſied.*

The Occaſion and Meaning of the Words being thus explained, we may from this Hiſtory, whereof the Words of the Text contain the principal Circumſtances, make the following Obſervations.

1*ſt*, That the Nature and Spirit of the Chriſtian Religion, is to lay as little Streſs as poſſible upon all *external* Rites; and to have the greateſt Regard that

that can be, to the *moral* Qualifications of mens Minds. The *Perſons* to whom St. *Paul* puts the Queſtion in the Text, are, in the Verſe before, ſtiled *Diſciples* or Believers, that is, *Chriſtians*; though they had been inſtructed in nothing yet, but in the Doctrine of *John the Baptiſt*. Repentance from dead Works, and Reformation of Life, and a preparatory Diſpoſition to receive the Will of God when made known to them by the Meſſias to come, were here judged ſufficient to denominate men *Diſciples*; even *before* they had been *baptized* into the Name of *Chriſt*, or had received any of the *external Gifts* of the Holy Ghoſt, or had ſo much as *heard* that ſuch Gifts were to be beſtowed upon them. There is *no external Rite* in matters of Religion, more poſitively and expreſsly commanded by God, or more indiſpenſably and without any Exception required by our Saviour, than that of *Baptiſm: Except a Man be born*, ſaith he, *of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God:* And yet even in *this very Caſe* of ſo expreſs a Command, (to ſhow how much Religion is judged of in the Sight of God by the moral and virtuous Diſpoſition of the Heart, more than by the outward Form,) there are *many* Inſtances in Scripture, where the *inward* Diſpoſition has been accepted inſtead of the *outward* Form; but *no* Caſe, where the *Form* or *Ceremony* has in any wiſe ſupplied the want of the *inward* Diſpoſition. The Thief upon the Croſs was aſſured by our Saviour, that he ſhould be with him that Day in Paradiſe; becauſe in the Diſpoſition of his Heart he was fitly qualified for Baptiſm, though there was no poſſibility of his having the Ceremony performed upon him. The Perſons mentioned in the Text, had they died before their being baptized in the Name of Chriſt; it cannot be queſtioned, but that thoſe whom the inſpired Writer calls *Diſciples here*, would by our Lord have been acknowledged for his true Diſciples *hereafter*. *Cornelius* the good Centurion, was *before his Baptiſm* filled with the miraculous Gifts of the Holy Spirit: And *no Reaſon* can be conceived why that Teſtimony of the Divine Favour ſhould be conferred upon him juſt *before* his Baptiſm, which the Apoſtles themſelves expected could not have been beſtowed till *after* it; but only that the Spirit of God thought it of Importance to declare in ſo extraordinary a manner, that even where to the Uſe of a Form or Ceremony God *has* annexed his Gifts, yet even there, not *upon account of* the Form, or the Rite itſelf, but upon account of the *inward Qualifications* of the *Mind*, does he beſtow his Spiritual Bleſſings. In the regular Adminiſtration of Baptiſm it ſelf, 'tis not the *waſhing away of the Filth of the Fleſh*, that ſaveth us; but *the Anſwer of a good Conſcience towards God*; 1 Pet. iii. 21. Many *Martyrs* in the Primitive Times, upon their profeſſing their Faith in Chriſt, were immediately hurried away to bear Teſtimony for him with their Blood: And no man doubted, but that they who *in reality* were buried *with him* and *for him* into Death; were at leaſt equallized with thoſe, who by Baptiſm died with him only *in a Figure*. *Infants*, who die unbaptized; unavoidably, and not poſſibly by any Fault of their own; cannot with reaſon be worſe and more hardly thought of, than *grown Perſons* in the like Condition. For concerning *Infants, as Infants*, and merely upon Account of their Innocency, it is, that our Saviour affirms, that *of ſuch is the Kingdom of Heaven*. And the *reaſon why* they are ſaved, is not *becauſe* they are *baptized*; but they are *therefore* baptized, *becauſe* they are capable of *Salvation*; They are *therefore* fit to be admitted into the Body of God's Church on *Earth*, *becauſe* they are by their Innocence qualified to become Members of his eternal Kingdom in *Heaven*. Nevertheleſs, though the *thing ſignified itſelf*, is always of much more Importance than the *Sign*; and often accepted by God in the Stead of and without the external Form; yet this is always ſo to be underſtood, when the external Form cannot be had. For where, by the Perſon's own wilful and contemptuous Neglect, any Ceremony of God's expreſs Appointment is omitted; there *he that deſpiſeth, deſpiſeth not Man, but God*; who has alſo annexed to what means he pleaſeth, the Gift of his Holy Spirit. *Except a man be born of Water and of the Spirit*, ſaith our Saviour; except he that has the Means and Opportunity of doing it, makes uſe of thoſe Means of Grace which God has been pleaſed to appoint; 'tis reaſonable

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ſonable he ſhould fall ſhort of the Grace itſelf, and *he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. Except ye eat my Fleſh and drink my Blood*, ſaith our Lord in another Place; His *principal* Meaning is, except ye receive my *Doctrine*, and, by obeying it, incorporate yourſelves into my ſpiritual Body; *ye have no Life in you*: This (I ſay) is plainly his *principal* Meaning, becauſe the Words were ſpoken *before* any *external Symbols* of his Body and Blood were inſtituted: Yet, *when* ſuch Sacramental Symbols *were* appointed; *then* it became the Duty of every ſincere Chriſtian, not only to eat our Lord's Fleſh and drink his Blood *ſpiritually*; not only ſo to imbibe his Doctrine, as to make it the Support and Nouriſhment of a Spiritual Life, the Spring and Ground-work of a Holy and Virtuous Converſation; but it became their Duty alſo to participate of the *External Sacrament*, and to make uſe of the *Means*, as well as deſire the *End*, of Chriſt's own Appointment. The *Diſciples* in the Text, when they heard St. *Paul* preach about the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt, immediately they were baptized *in the Name of the Lord Jeſus*; And *without* ſo doing, they would not have received the Gifts of the Spirit, notwithſtanding that the Text does *before* call them *Diſciples*, upon their having been baptized with the Baptiſm of Repentance by *John*. This ſhows how well conſiſtent, the *Neceſſity* of obſerving any Rite or Ceremony of God's own Appointment is, with the Chriſtian Religion's laying at the ſame Time *no ſtreſs at all* upon the *external* Form or Ceremony itſelf, but only on the *internal* moral Diſpoſition or virtuous Qualification of the Mind. To which *inward* Qualification of Mind, great regard is always ſhown in Scripture, even where *all external* Advantages have been wanting. Thus to the *Scribe* who was ſo well-diſpoſed, as to judge that the Love of God and of our Neighbour, was more valuable than all whole burnt-offerings; our Saviour immediately replies, *Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God*; Mar. xii. 34. Of the *young Man* who had obſerved the Commandments from his youth, 'tis recorded that *Jeſus beholding him loved him*; Mar. x. 21. To the *Syrophœnician Woman*, whom at firſt our Lord ſeemed to reject with great ſeverity, for not being of the Houſe of *Iſrael*; yet at length he replies, *O woman, great is thy Faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt*; Matt. xv. 28. And of the *Gentiles themſelves*, St *Paul* makes no ſcruple to affirm, that their Uncircumciſion, if they keep the Righteouſneſs of the Law, ſhall be counted unto them for Circumciſion; *Rom.* ii. 26. But now, on the *other* ſide, no *external* Advantages, no *Rites* or Obſervations whatſoever, are ever accepted in the ſtead of, or without, the *inward* Moral and virtuous Diſpoſition of the Heart and Mind. Not *Baptiſm* itſelf; not the Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*; not even the *miraculous Gifts* and Graces of the Holy Ghoſt, are of any avail to an unrighteous Perſon. *Many will ſay to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy Name, and in thy Name have caſt out devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profeſs unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity*; Matt. vii. 22.

2 The next Obſervation we may draw from the Words of the Text, is, that *every* Diſciple of Chriſt is here *ſuppoſed* to have received the *Gift of the Holy Ghoſt*. For ſo St *Paul*, as in words equivalent to asking them whether they had been *baptized* or no, thus puts the Queſtion to them, *Have ye received the Holy Ghoſt ſince ye believed?* And *what* was then meant by *receiving the Holy Ghoſt*, appears from the following Words, *ver.* 6; *And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghoſt came on them; and they ſpake with tongues and propheſied.* This was the immediate Effect of the Holy Ghoſt's *firſt* coming upon the *Apoſtles* at Pentecoſt; And This was generally the Effect of its coming *afterward* upon *new Converts* at their Baptiſm. And when this miraculous Effect ceaſed, yet ſtill the receiving of the Holy Ghoſt was as conſtant and as neceſſary as ever: becauſe *Except a man be born of the Spirit*, as well as *of water*, *he* cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. 'Tis *Now* true, as well as it was *Then*, that *if any man has not the Spirit of Chriſt, he is none of his*; and that *the Spirit of Chriſt dwelleth in us, except we be reprobates.*

The

The way to *know* whether any perſon *has* this Spirit dwelling in him, or *no*; is by the *Fruits* of the Spirit; For *the Tree is known by its Fruit*; Matt. xii. 33. Now the *Fruits* of the Spirit, are either *temporary* or *perpetual*. *Temporary*; ſuch as are the *miraculous* Gifts *of ſpeaking with tongues, propheſying, healing diſeaſes, and the like*. Or *Perpetual*; ſuch as are the *moral* Diſpoſitions and Habits of the Mind, worked in us by the Spirit of God, improved in us by his continual Aſſiſtance, and acceptable to him in the Performance; Namely *goodneſs, righteouſneſs, and truth*, as St *Paul* reckons them up; *Eph.* v. 9; and more largely; *Gal.* v. 22; *The Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, faith, meekneſs, temperance.* Theſe are the *permanent* Fruits of the Spirit, neceſſary to be found *at all times* in every baptized Perſon; Otherwiſe his Baptiſm is nothing elſe, but merely the waſhing away the Filth of the Fleſh; ſo that, being born of *Water* only, and not of the *Spirit*, *he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* In whomſoever theſe *moral Fruits* of the Spirit *are found*, the other *miraculous and extraordinary* ones are *Now* unneceſſary; And even *Then*, at the firſt preaching of the Goſpel, when they were the *moſt needful* of all, yet were they uſeleſs and unprofitable to thoſe very Perſons in whom they moſt abounded, if the *moral Fruits* of the Spirit were not found in conjunction with them. By the Habits of Piety and true Holineſs, Men may *Now* ſhow themſelves as full of the Holy Ghoſt as ever, *without* any miraculous Gifts; *with* the greateſt abundance of which, they were ſtill void of the Holy Ghoſt even *Then*, if not indued with Piety and true Holineſs. For *miraculous Gifts*, were but *Signs* of the Holy Spirit working by them, not *in* and *upon* them. And therefore ſuch Gifts were uſeful, rather to *Others* than *themſelves*; to convince *beholders*, rather than to ſanctify the *perſons*: *Tongues*, ſaith St *Paul*, *are for a Sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not.* But *moral Virtues*, are Evidences of the Spirit's dwelling *in* Men, and *ſanctifing* Mens Hearts and Lives: Which *to themſelves* is the *End* and *Effect* of that *Belief*, the producing but the *firſt Beginnings* whereof in *Others*, is all that is intended by *miraculous Gifts.* Theſe extraordinary Gifts therefore, were only *Operations* of the Spirit; But Righteouſneſs and Holineſs are properly called its *Fruits. Fruits of the Spirit*; becauſe worked, not as the others, extrinſecally, neceſſarily, and without the concurrence of the Perſons themſelves; but worked *in* the Mind, and *with* the free choice and *Will* of the Perſon, by the *approbation, aſſiſtance*, and *help* of *the Spirit* of God, *concurring with* him, not barely operating *by* him. For which reaſon, *Theſe* are never found but in *Good* Men; being indeed the Qualifications which *denominate* Men ſuch: But the *Others* were often beſtowed even upon *hypocritical* Perſons; whom our Saviour, though they had done in his Name many wonderful Works, yet declares he will reject from him, as being at the ſame time Workers of iniquity. And hence it is, that our Lord makes that remarkable Diſtinction; St *Luke* x. 20; *In This rejoice not, that the Spirits are ſubject unto you; but rather rejoice, becauſe your Names are written in Heaven:* That is, 'tis a thing much more valuable, to be a good Man, than to be able to caſt out Devils. Hence alſo it is, that St *Paul* gives ſo manifeſt a preference to works of *righteouſneſs*, before *miraculous* Gifts; 1 Cor. xii. 30. *Have All the gifts of healing? do All ſpeak with tongues? do All interpret? But covet earneſtly the beſt Gifts, and yet ſhow I unto you a* more *excellent Way*; a way *yet more* excellent, even than the *beſt* Gifts. And what *That* is, he tells us in the next words; *Though I ſpeak with the Tongues of Men and of Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as ſounding Braſs or a tinkling Cymbal: And tho' I have the Gift of Prophecy, and underſtand all myſteries and all knowledge; And tho' I have all Faith, ſo that I could remove Mountains, and have no Charity, I am nothing.* If I have no Charity; that is, if I am not indued with a Spirit of univerſal Love and Goodneſs towards Men. For ſo it is remarkable in the whole New Teſtament, that the word *Charity* never ſignifies, as it does Now in common Speech, the mere *giving of Alms to the poor*; but it always means, in a larger Signification, That *Love and Deſire of doing good to all Men*, which is oppoſed to Uncharitableneſs, Peeviſhneſs,

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Hatred, Animoſity and Factiouſneſs. As is particularly evident in the Verſe next following; where *Charity* is expreſsly diſtinguiſhed from *giving Alms to the Poor*, as the *whole* of a Duty from its *part*: *Though I give* (ſaith he) *my body to be burned, and though I beſtow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not Charity*, (that is, have not an univerſally good and righteous Spirit,) *it profiteth me nothing.*

3*dly*, From the character of the perſons deſcribed in the Text, we may obſerve that thoſe words, *we have not ſo much as heard whether there* be *any Holy Ghoſt*, cannot poſſibly be a right tranſlation; but that they ought to have been rendred thus, *we have not ſo much as heard whether there* be *any* Giving *of the Holy Ghoſt*; any *ſuch* Gift or Diſtribution of it, as the Apoſtle enquired after. (There is a like expreſſion; *Joh.* vii. 39; *The Holy Ghoſt was not yet*; ſo 'tis in the original; which in the Tranſlation we very rightly expreſs, *The Holy Ghoſt was not yet* given, *becauſe that Jeſus was not yet glorified.*) Now of *This* indeed, of the extraordinary *Gifts* and miraculous *Effuſion* of the Holy Ghoſt, the perſons mentioned in the Text *might* in their preſent circumſtances be ignorant: But, *whether there* be *any Holy Ghoſt*, This is what they could not poſſibly make a Queſtion of. For, not to ſay that even the *Gentiles themſelves* were not without ſome Notion of a *divine Afflatus*, 'tis well known that the *Jews* had in the Writings of the Prophets perpetual mention of the *Spirit of God*: And therefore the Perſons in the Text, who were of all other Jews or Proſelytes the *beſt inſtructed*, as having been baptized with *John*'s Baptiſm, 'tis plain could not poſſibly be ignorant of *That*, however they might not yet have heard of the extraordinary and miraculous Effuſion of it ſince the Aſcenſion of Chriſt.

4*thly*, From the *manner* of the Apoſtle's putting the Queſtion, *Unto* What *then were ye baptized?* unto *what*, if not unto the expectation of the Gift of the *Holy Ghoſt?* from this *manner* of the Apoſtle's putting the Queſtion, it appears, that the following Words, ver. 5; *when they heard This, they were baptized in the Name of the* Lord Jeſus; and the like Expreſſions in other parts of this Book, ch. viii. 16; *they were baptized in the Name of the* Lord Jeſus; and ch. ii. 38; *be baptized every one of you in the* Name of Jeſus Chriſt; and ch. x. 48; *he commanded them to be baptized in the Name of the* Lord; it appears (I ſay) that theſe Expreſſions do by no means ſignifie, as if any one was ever baptized *barely* into the Name of *Chriſt*; but on the contrary, that they are an abbreviate way of ſpeaking, (ſuch as is every where very uſual in matters ſuppoſed to be already perfectly well known,) to put the *part* for the *whole*. Baptizing into *Jeſus Chriſt*, was well known by all Chriſtians, to ſignify baptizing in *That Form*, which our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* had appointed; that is, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt: And where-ever *part* of this Form is expreſt, the *whole* is always underſtood to be implied. Had it been uſual, according to the *Letter* of theſe expreſſions, to baptize Men into the Name of *Chriſt* only; the Apoſtle could not properly have asked thoſe who had not yet heard of the Giſt of the *Holy Ghoſt*, *unto what then were ye* Baptized? but his queſtion ſhould have been, *after what manner have ye been* inſtructed? But putting the Queſtion in the manner he does; *if ye are ignorant of the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt, unto what then were ye* Baptized? ſhows plainly, that not only in the doctrinal *inſtruction* of a Chriſtian, but alſo in the *Baptiſm* itſelf, there muſt have been mention of the *Holy Ghoſt*, notwithſtanding that abbreviate manner of ſpeaking, wherein they are ſaid only *to have been in the Name of the Lord Jeſus*, in contra-diſtinction to *John*'s *Baptiſm*. And from hence alſo it appears further, *what* was then underſtood by thoſe Words in the form of Baptiſm, *And of the Holy Ghoſt*, or *in the Name of the Holy Ghoſt*: Namely, that the Perſon, as he was baptized into the Knowledge of *God*, and into the Death of *Chriſt*, ſo he was baptized alſo into the Expectation of the Gifts of the *Holy Ghoſt*; whether thoſe Gifts were *extraordinary*, as the miraculous Powers conferred at that particular Time; or *ordinary*, as the Sanctification of Mens Hearts for ever.

Laſtly,

Laſtly, From the Hiſtory in the Text, we may learn the difference between the Baptiſm of *John* and that of *Chriſt*, how they were both really but one Thing, the former being imperfect without the latter, and the latter perfecting only what the former had begun, and therefore not being called a Rebaptizing. When the Diſciples, to the queſtion, *Unto what then were ye baptized?* made this Anſwer, *Unto John's Baptiſm*; The Apoſtle replies, ver 4; *John verily baptized with the Baptiſm of Repentance, ſaying unto the People, that they ſhould believe on* Him, *which ſhould come after him, that is, on Chriſt Jeſus*: And *when they heard This, they were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jeſus; and when Paul had laid his Hands upon them, the Holy Ghoſt came on them.* *John* baptized into the *Expectation* only, of Him that was to come after; And therefore *This* his Baptiſm was *imperfect*, till the *intention* of it was fulfilled by the ſame Perſons being afterwards baptized into the Name of Chriſt when he *was* come, and *receiving* actually *his Gifts*, of which the Former Baptiſm was but declaring a *preparatory Expectation*. And This is what is ſet forth in thoſe Texts, where *John the Baptiſt* expreſsly acknowledges and declares, *I indeed* (ſaith he) *baptize you with Water unto Repentance; but he that cometh after me, is mightier than I, whoſe ſhoes I am not worthy to bear; he ſhall baptize you with the Holy Ghoſt, and with Fire*; Matt. iii. 11: Mar. i. 7, 8. Luk. iii. 16, 17: Acts i. 5, and xi. 16; *With the Holy Ghoſt and with Fire*; that is, with the *Gifts* of the Holy Ghoſt, both *ordinary* and *extraordinary*: Which was *literally* fulfilled upon the *Apoſtles* at Pentecoſt; and, in the *virtual Effect*, upon all the *other* Diſciples who were baptized afterwards. And again: *John bare record, ſaying*; Joh. i. 31, 32; *that* He [*viz.* that *Chriſt*] *ſhould be made manifeſt to Iſrael, therefore am I come baptizing* [only] *with Water*: According to the Account the Angel prophetically gave *before* of his Office; *Luk.* i. 16; *Many of the children of Iſrael ſhall he turn to the Lord their God; and he ſhall go before him in the Spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the Fathers to the children, and the diſobedient to the wiſdom of the juſt, to make* ready *a people* prepared *for the Lord*. Theſe are the *particular* Obſervations I thought uſeful to draw from the Hiſtory in the Text: It remains that we conſider in the next place the *general* Doctrine concerning the Nature and Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which was the Foundation and Occaſion of the *particular* Incidents referred to in the Text.

SERMON III.

Of receiving the Holy Ghoſt.

[*Preached on Whitſunday.*]

ACTS xix. 2, 3.

He ſaid unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghoſt ſince ye believed? And they ſaid unto him, We have not ſo much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghoſt. And he ſaid unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized?

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IN a former Diſcourſe upon theſe Words, I have endeavoured briefly to explain the meaning, of the ſeveral *particular* Expreſſions here made uſe of by the Apoſtle, and by the new Converts, with whom he diſcourſed. It remains at this Time, according to the Method propoſed, that I proceed in the next place to conſider the *general* Doctrine, concerning the *Nature* and *Gifts* of the Holy Spirit, which was the Foundation and Occaſion of the *particular* Incidents referred to in the Text. And,

I. When *John the Baptiſt* came preaching and baptizing with Water; with whoſe Baptiſm *only*, the Diſciples in the Text having been baptized, had neither received the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt *themſelves*, nor ſo much as *heard* of its miraculous Gifts being beſtowed on *others*; he modeſtly and plainly confeſſed; *Matt.* iii. 11; *I indeed baptize you with Water unto Repentance; but He that cometh after me, is mightier than I, whoſe Shoes I am not worthy to bear; he ſhall baptize you with the Holy Ghoſt and with Fire.* According to This Declaration of *John the Baptiſt*, our Saviour, a little before his Aſcenſion, promiſed his Diſciples; *Acts* i. 5; *John truly baptized with Water, but ye ſhall be baptized with the Holy Ghoſt not many days hence.* And This his Promiſe was effectually made good to them, in that miraculous Effuſion of the Holy Spirit at

at Pentecoſt, which we this day commemorate, and which is particularly deſcribed in the ſecond Chapter of the *Acts*. Where that *Circumſtance* of *their appearing* unto the Apoſtles *cloven tongues, like as of* Fire, ver. 3; explains the Meaning of that prophetical Phraſe uſed by *John the Baptiſt* concerning our Lord, *He ſhall baptize you with the Holy Ghoſt and with* Fire; He ſhall baptize you with the *Holy Ghoſt*, deſcending at firſt *viſibly* in the Appearance of *Fire*; and continuing with you afterwards, in purſuance of what That Emblem repreſented, by an Aſſiſtance as much more powerful and efficacious than what *John Baptiſt* pretended to, as *Fire* is more powerful and more purifying than Water. To the Apoſtles and firſt Diſciples, who were to ſpread the Goſpel over the World, this their being baptized with the Holy Ghoſt, was accompanied with miraculous Gifts and Powers; ſuch as ſpeaking with tongues, healing diſeaſes, and the like: But when the Reaſon of theſe miraculous Operations ceaſed, yet *ſtill* every Chriſtian is baptized with the *Holy Ghoſt* as well as with *Water*; and his *internal* ſanctifying Gifts and Graces, are to continue with us always even unto the End of the World. If any one has not received *theſe* Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, it may ſtill be asked him with the ſame propriety as in the Text, *Unto what then was he baptized?* If any Man has not in him the Spirit of Chriſt; if he does not ſhow forth in his Life the Fruits of the Spirit, by Works of Righteouſneſs and true Piety; if his Heart be not ſanctified by this Spirit of Holineſs; if his Mind approves not, and delights not in things ſpiritual; if his Will obeys not the good Motions of this Divine Aſſiſter; if the Actions of his Life are not guided by the Commands of God, revealed to us in Scripture by the Inſpiration of the Holy Ghoſt; *to what purpoſe then was ſuch a Perſon baptized?* SERM. III.

It may here perhaps be enquired, *Does not the Spirit of God diſtribute to every man ſeverally as he* himſelf *willeth? Does not the wind blow where it liſteth, and ſo* (ſaith our Saviour) *is every one that is born of the Spirit?* Are we not *juſtified freely by God's grace?* And does not the Apoſtle accordingly require us humbly to acknowledge, *Who maketh thee to differ from another?* How then can it be objected to any Man as a *Fault*, or as a *Defect* in *himſelf*, that he has not received the Holy Ghoſt, or that he is not endued with thoſe Gifts and Graces, which are not his own acquirements, but free diſtributions of the Spirit of God? To give a clear and ſatisfactory Anſwer to this Difficulty, it is neceſſary that we attend to the following Diſtinction.

Some Gifts of the Spirit are mere external miraculous Powers; ſuch as ſpeaking with Tongues, healing Diſeaſes, and the like: And of theſe it is, that the Apoſtle declares, that the Spirit *ſo* divides to every Man ſeverally as he willeth, and *ſo* maketh One to differ from another, that nothing at all of theſe kinds of Gifts depends in any meaſure upon the Will of the Perſons themſelves. And therefore as by *having* theſe Gifts, no Man was the better Chriſtian; ſo no Man by *wanting* them, was the worſe; theſe Gifts being beſtowed, not for the Benefit of the *Perſons themſelves*, but for the Converſion of *Others*.

Other Gifts of the Spirit, are particular Powers and *Qualifications* for particular *Offices*; Of which the Apoſtle ſpeaks; *Eph.* iv. 7, 11; *To every one of us is given grace* (or *a gift*,) *according to the meaſure of the Gift of Chriſt*; who *gave ſome Apoſtles, and ſome prophets, and ſome evangeliſts, and ſome paſtors and teachers*; *for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Miniſtry, for the edifying of the Body of Chriſt*. And, with reſpect to *Theſe*, the Goodneſs of a Chriſtian did not conſiſt in his having *This* or *That* particular Gift, but in making a right *Uſe* of his Talent, whatever it was. *Rom.* xii. 3; *'Twas* God *that dealt to every man the meaſure of Faith*; that is, (as it appears from the words immediately following;) God, according to his own good pleaſure, diſtributed to each one a *particular Truſt* or Employment; That is in this place the meaning of the *Meaſure of Faith*; 'Tis a *Truſt* committed to each one's *Fidelity* or *Faithfulneſs*. *Having therefore Gifts* (adds the Apoſtle, ver. 6.) *differing according to the grace that is given to us*; *whether it be propheſying, let us propheſy according to the proportion of Faith*, (according to the proportion of the *Gift*

SERM. III. *entruſted* to our *Fidelity*; ſo the words properly ſignify;) *Or if it be Miniſtry let us wait on our miniſtring; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; He that giveth, let him do it with Simplicity*, (that is, liberally; *he that ruleth, with diligence; he that ſhoweth mercy, with cheerfulneſs.*

Again: *Other* Gifts of the Spirit, are *particular and perſonal Advantagious Circumſtances* in the peculiar *Conſtitutions* of Mens *Bodies*, the natural *Frame and Temper* of their *Mind*, or their external *State* of *Life* and *Condition* in the World; by which they are peculiarly fitted for the Exerciſe of ſome particular Offices, or for the continuing in ſome particular *Manner* and *Courſe* of *Life*. Of *Theſe* the Apoſtle ſpeaks 1 *Cor.* vii. 7; *I would*, ſays he, *that all men were even as I myſelf; But every man hath his proper gift of God* (a *natural Qualification* or *Fitneſs* for certain *particular Duties* or *States* of Life,) *one after This manner, and another after That.* And, with reſpect to *Theſe*, the Goodneſs of a Chriſtian does not conſiſt in his being endued with *This* or *That* particular Qualification; but in his behaving himſelf *ſuitably* to *Theſe* Qualifications wherewith God *has* indued him.

Laſtly, *Other* (and indeed the *Principal*) Gifts or Fruits of the Spirit, are *moral Virtues*; Righteouſneſs, Peace, Goodneſs, Meekneſs, Temperance, and the like. And in *Theſe* lies the only difficulty of the Queſtion. If they be Fruits of the *Spirit*, and worked in us by the Power of the *Grace* of God; how then can it be objected to any Man as a *Fault* or as a *Defect* in *himſelf*, that he has not *Thus* received the Holy Ghoſt. The True Anſwer is; that theſe *moral* Graces, are not, like thoſe others before-mentioned, worked on Men neceſſarily by an external Operation, but depend on the endeavours of their own *Will*, at the ſame Time that they are promoted by the Aſſiſtance of the *Holy Spirit*. Every perſon that embraces the Goſpel and is baptized, has received the Promiſe of the Holy Ghoſt; and 'tis wholly his own Fault, and his own Wickedneſs only, if, with That Aſſiſtance, he brings not forth the Fruits of the Spirit. The Aſſiſtance of the Spirit, is indeed neceſſary to *enable men* to bring forth Fruits meet for the Kingdom of God; But then, becauſe 'tis the *Aſſiſtance* only, and not (like the miraculous Operations) the *entire* Work of the Spirit; and becauſe That Aſſiſtance is always afforded Men in proportion to the ſincere Endeavours of their *own Will* co-operating; therefore 'tis juſtly charged upon a Man as his own Fault, if he wants thoſe Virtues and Graces of the Spirit, which, were it not for his wilful rejecting its good Motions, the good Spirit of God would never be wanting in aſſiſting him to practiſe. *Examine yourſelves*, (ſaith St *Paul*) *whether ye be in the Faith: Prove your own ſelves: know ye not your own ſelves, how that Jeſus Chriſt is in you*, (or, as it is elſewhere expreſſed, *the Spirit of Chriſt dwelleth in you,*) *except ye be reprobates*, That is, except by your own perverſe wickedneſs ye drive him from you, 2 *Cor.* 5. And for this Reaſon (I ſuppoſe) it is, that whereas the *miraculous* Operations are generally in Scripture ſtiled the *Gifts* of the Spirit; the *moral* Virtues are on the contrary called, not the *Gifts*, but much more uſually the *Fruits* of the Spirit. *Fruits*; to the production of which, it is neceſſarily requiſite, that there be *good ground* in which the Root is planted; as that the *root* be good, which is planted in that Ground. 'Tis as neceſſary in order to bringing forth the *Fruits* of the Spirit, that the Will and good Diſpoſition of the Perſon himſelf, concur with the good Motions of the Spirit; as 'tis neceſſary that the Spirit affords his Aſſiſtance, to enable the Perſon effectually to fulfil his own good Diſpoſitions. Our Saviour has illuſtrated This to us, in the Parable of the Sower; where the Fruit brought forth in ſeveral Places, is repreſented exactly proportionable to the Goodneſs of the Ground. The Seed ſown, is the Word of God; and the Rain which cauſed it to grow, is the Aſſiſtance of the divine Spirit. Now though without Seed ſown in the Earth, and without Rain from Heaven, no Fruit indeed could have been produced; yet to the Badneſs of the *ground* only is all the Failure juſtly aſcribed in this Parable by our Lord, becauſe the other Neceſſaries were ſupplied from above. In like manner, though Chriſtian Virtues

tues are indeed the Fruits of the Spirit, and could not, without the Aſſiſtance of the divine Spirit, be acceptably and effectually produced; yet becauſe This Aſſiſtance from above is never wanting but through our own unworthineſs, therefore moſt juſtly is every wicked Perſon blamed and puniſhed, for being void of thoſe Virtues, which are the Fruits of the Spirit. The ſame thing is expreſſed to us in the Parable of the Vineyard *Iſ.* 5. 2; where God complains by the Prophet concerning the people of the *Jews* whom he compares to a *Vineyard*; that he had *fenced it, and gathered out the Stones thereof, and planted it with the choiceſt Vine; and he looked that it ſhould bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild Grapes.* The planting and dreſſing the Vineyard was neceſſary to its bringing forth good Grapes; but when it failed to do ſo, the Fault was in the Vineyard itſelf; ver. 4. *What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it ſhould bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?* God does, on *his* part, always what is neceſſary for our Aſſiſtance; and no more denies his Holy Spirit to ſuch as worthily ask him, than a tender Father, *if his Son asks an Egg, will give him a Scorpion*; Luke xi. 12. But men by their own unworthineſs, and reſiſting his good Motions, do quench and grieve and drive him from them; and then moſt juſtly is it charged upon them as their *own Fault*, if they have not in them the Spirit of God, which yet at the ſame time is God's *free* Gift when beſtowed at all. Free; becauſe originally God had no Obligation, but his own mere Goodneſs, to confer it on *any*; and yet nevertheleſs it is every man's *own* Fault, if he receives it not; becauſe God never with-holds this his Free Gift, but from Thoſe only who are not ſincerely willing to co-operate with it; in bringing forth thoſe Fruits of Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs, which, upon account of That concurrence, are, at the ſame time, both the *Virtues* of the *Man*, and the *Fruits* of the *Spirit*. When therefore the Scripture affirms that we are *juſtified* freely *by his Grace*; the meaning is not, that the Grace of God operates upon Men as Machines; and that *he* ſo acts upon them, as to make needleſs their acting for *themſelves*. But the intention of the Phraſe is to declare, that it is owing to the free Grace, or undeſerved Favour of God, made known in the Goſpel; that the imperfect Fruits of Righteouſneſs which by our beſt Endeavours we are able to bring forth, are *accepted* of him unto juſtification; and that the *Aſſiſtance* of the good Spirit of God is always at hand, to ſtrengthen and enable us to bring forth thoſe Fruits. In like manner, when our Saviour declares, that *the Wind bloweth where it liſteth, and we hear the Sound thereof, but know not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth*; and that *ſo is every one that is born of the Spirit*; the meaning is not, that the Spirit regenerates Men without any care or co-operation of their own; (for That would make all the Exhortations of the Goſpel vain and abſurd;) but the Intent of the paſſage is, that the *Manner* and *Degrees*, by which the Grace of the Goſpel enables a Man to reform the whole moral Frame and Temper of his Mind, are as imperceptible to Senſe, as the ſecret Cauſes of many great Effects and Operations in Nature. That Regeneration is *owing* to the Aſſiſtance of the *Holy Ghoſt*, our Saviour plainly ſhows in this argument, both by the ſimilitude itſelf, and by expreſsly calling it our being *born of the Spirit*; Yet that at the ſame Time it depends upon the Man's own Will, whether that divine Aſſiſtance ſhall take effect in him; he no leſs plainly declares in the very ſame diſcourſe, by *requiring* it of *Us* as an indiſpenſable *Duty*, that we *be born of the Spirit: Except a man*, ſaith he, *be born of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*. From hence we may underſtand how it comes to paſs, that uſually in Scripture Phraſe, both all the good that *men do* is aſcribed to *God*, and all the good that *God works in them* is ſtill nevertheleſs aſcribed to *themſelves*. It is *God* that *worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleaſure*; and yet in the very ſame Verſe we are commanded to *work out our own Salvation* ourſelves; nay, we are commanded to do it for that very Reaſon, becauſe God has given us the Power both of willing and performing it. As *every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his* own *Luſt, and enticed*; and yet at the ſame Time all Sin is

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aſcribed to the Temptations of the *Devil*, becauſe the Devil is the Head of Apoſtacy, and delights in the Sins of Men, and lays before them Opportunities of being enticed and drawn away by their *own* Luſt and Wickedneſs, without which he could otherwiſe have no Power over them; ſo, becauſe *God* is the original Author of all good, and the Giver of all the Powers by which we *do* good, and *encourages and aſſiſts* us in the performance of it; therefore moſt juſtly in Scripture is all the good we do, aſcribed to *Him*; and yet, becauſe without our *own* Care and Concurrence to put them in *Action*, all theſe *Powers* and Aſſiſtances are in vain; it is therefore very reaſonably urged as a *Duty* incumbent upon *Ourſelves*, to *grow in Grace*, 2 Pet. iii. 18; and it is required of us by an indiſpenſable Obligation, that *We* bring forth the Fruits of *the Spirit*. And This is implied to us in the very Form of Baptiſm: For when we are baptized in the *Name* of the *Holy Ghoſt*, *into what is it that we are ſo baptized*, but into the *expectation* of the *Aſſiſtance* of the Holy Spirit, and into a ſolemn *Promiſe* of *ſubmitting* ourſelves accordingly to his holy *Guidance and Direction?* As, being baptized in the Name of *the Father*, is declaring our *Aſſurance* of *Reconciliation* and *Return* to his Favour, who had been juſtly offended with us; and a ſolemn *Dedication* of ourſelves to His Service for the future, as the One ſupreme Governour and Lord of the Univerſe: And being baptized in the Name of *the Son*, is being baptized into the *Remiſſion* of Sins by his Blood, and into a ſolemn *Obligation*, on our own part, of dying with him unto Sin, and riſing again unto Newneſs of Life: So, being baptized in the Name of *the Holy Ghoſt*, is at the ſame time a ſolemn Declaration both of our *Hoping* for his Guidance, and of our *Reſolving to* obey it.

2 I Have been the longer upon This *firſt* Head concerning the *Gifts* of the Spirit, becauſe it is a Doctrine of the Higheſt Importance to us, and of great Moment in Practice. That which remains in the 2*d* place, concerning the *Nature and Offices* of the Holy Spirit, being more ſpeculative, I ſhall explain very briefly in few words. As to the proper *Nature* of this divine Spirit, the Vanity and Pride of learned Men has often confounded their Underſtandings, while they have preſumed to be wiſe above what is written, intruding into things which they have not ſeen, and attempting to explain what God has not revealed. The Eſſence and inmoſt Nature of the ſmalleſt *Body*, we cannot fully underſtand: The Life of the meaneſt *Animal*, is beyond all our Philoſophy to explain: The Nature of the *Soul of Man*, is ſtill a more unſearchable Myſtery; The Nature and Eſſence of *Angels*, is yet far more unfathomable than any of Theſe: How then ſhould vain Man preſume to ſearch out the Nature of the *Spirit* of God? the Nature of the *only begotten Son* of God? the Nature of the *Father* himſelf, the incomprehenſible God and Father of all things? What the Scripture expreſsly declares to us, is all we can ever know concerning theſe Matters; and This the meaneſt Chriſtian is as capable of underſtanding, as the learnedeſt Diſputers in the World. Concerning the *Nature of the Holy Spirit* therefore, That which the Scripture teaches us, is, *This* only; that He is a Divine Perſon, in an ineffable manner deriving his Being, proceeding from, or being ſent forth from, the Father; *whereby* he is, and *upon which account* he is ſtiled, in a ſingular and peculiar manner, *The Spirit of God*. And becauſe after the Aſcenſion of Chriſt, the Gifts diſtributed by the ſame Spirit, were, according to the Promiſe of the Father, poured forth in *much greater plenty and abundance* than before; therefore he is frequently ſtiled likewiſe, *The Spirit of Chriſt*: And before that *Jeſus* was *glorified*, it is affirmed therefore of the ſame Spirit in the Goſpel, (comparatively to that *much larger Effuſion* which was to follow after,) that he *was not yet given* at all, St. *Joh.* vii. 39; In which Paſſage it is very remarkable, that the words in the Original are, *The Holy Ghoſt was not yet*; meaning, was not yet *given*; juſt as in the Text the Diſciples are ſaid *not to have heard whether there* was *any Holy Ghoſt*; meaning, that they had not heard whether he was yet *given*. There have been *Some*, both in antient and modern Times, who have taught that the *Holy Ghoſt* was nothing but a *mere Power*, and Operation or Action of the Father: But though it is

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True, that *Powers* are indeed ſometimes in Scripture, according to the Nature of the *Jewiſh* Language, ſpoken of figuratively as *Perſons*; yet in the preſent Caſe it is plain on the contrary, that the *Perſon* of the Holy Spirit is often repreſented and ſpoken of as the *Power* of the Father, only becauſe *By Him* it is that the Father works all Miracles and beſtows all Gifts. Nor can thoſe Texts be underſtood any otherwiſe, than of a real Perſon; in which it is expreſſed that *He*, (in the original it is, *That Perſon*,) *the Spirit of Truth is come*, Joh. xvi. 13; that *he maketh interceſſion for us*, Rom. viii. 26; that he *divideth* ſpiritual Gifts, *to every one ſeverally as he willeth*, 1 Cor. xii. 11. and that *he ſhall not ſpeak of himſelf, but what he ſhall hear*, or receive from the Father, *That ſhall he ſpeak*; Joh. xvi. 13. Theſe, and other the like Texts, do plainly declare the Holy Spirit to be, not a mere Power or Operation, but a real Perſon ſent forth from the Father and the Son, for the perpetual Government and Direction of the Church.

In which Miſſion, the ſeveral *Offices* which the Scripture teaches us he performs, are as follows; that it was He who inſpired the Prophets of old, to teſtify before-hand the Sufferings of Chriſt, and the Glory that ſhould follow: that he was afterwards ſent forth in a more particular and extraordinary manner, to be the Comforter, Director, and Guide of the Apoſtles; to lead them into all Truth; to bring to their remembrance all things whatſoever Chriſt had before ſaid unto them; to ſupport them againſt the Power of the World; to inſtruct them what to anſwer to their Perſecutors; to be the great Witneſs of our Saviour's Reſurrection, by working Signs and Wonders and mighty Works, by inſpiring the Apoſtles with the Gift of Tongues, and dividing to their Followers Diverſities of Gifts; Finally, to continue with all good Chriſtians even unto the End of the World, as the great Sanctifier of the Hearts of Men; ſanctifying them, not by working upon them mechanically as Machines, but by moral Motives as rational Beings; aſſiſting them with his Grace, admoniſhing them with his holy Influences, working with them and inſpiring them with his good Gifts, and helping the Infirmity of their Prayers with an Energy that cannot be expreſſed.

3. Having thus briefly diſcourſed concerning the *Nature* and *Offices* and *Gifts* of the Spirit; the *Application* of what has been ſaid, is, what *Returns* we are bound to make for the Benefit of thoſe Divine Gifts beſtowed upon us. And *1ſt*, it will become us to return continual and hearty Thanks to *God*, as the original Author and Fountain of all Good; becauſe it is *He*, who has thus *given* unto us *His* holy Spirit; 1 *Theſſ.* iv. 8; and who has *ſent forth* the Spirit of his Son into our Hearts; *Gal.* iv. 6. *2dly*, As we are to return hearty Thanks for the Gifts already received, ſo we are continually to pray to God in the whole courſe of our Lives, that *This* his holy Spirit, into whoſe Name we were at firſt baptized, *i. e.* dedicated wholly to his Guidance and Direction in the Work of our Salvation; may never be withdrawn from us, but may continue to guide us by his perpetual influence, communion and fellowſhip. *3dly*, With regard to the Holy Spirit himſelf, it becomes us to endeavour to frame right and worthy Notions concerning him; that we acknowledge him to be the Inſpirer of the Prophets and Apoſtles; the Author and Worker of all Signs and Miracles; the Sanctifier of all Hearts, and the Diſtributer of all ſpiritual Gifts: that we believe and receive his Teſtimony, as delivered by the Inſpired Writers; that we obey his good Motions; be ſollicitous to obtain his Gifts and Graces; and infinitely careful not to grieve and quench and drive him from us, leſt we be found to do deſpite unto the Spirit of Grace; which in Scripture is repreſented as a more unpardonable Fault, than offending againſt the Perſon even of our Saviour himſelf. *How is it* (ſays the Apoſtle,) *that ye have agreed together to* tempt *the Spirit of the Lord?* Acts v. 19; To *tempt*; that is, in Scripture-language, to *provoke* him: *In the Day of Temptation in the Wilderneſs, when your Fathers* tempted *me*; the meaning is, provoked *me to Anger*; Pſ. xcv. 9. Again, *Epheſ.* iv. 30; *And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are ſealed unto the Day of Redemption:* The word, *ſealed*, is a figurative expreſſion; the mean-

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ing of which may be underſtood from *Rev.* vii. 3; *Hurt not the Earth, ——'till we have* ſealed *the Servants of our God in their Foreheads, i. e.* diſtinguiſhed them by a peculiar Mark, in order to preſerve them from a general Deſtruction. In Alluſion to which, good Chriſtians are ſaid to *be* ſealed *by the Spirit unto the day of Redemption*; *i. e.* diſtinguiſhed by the Fruits of the Spirit, in order to be delivered from the Wrath to come. And in purſuance of this Figure, is the like Expreſſion, 2 *Cor.* i. 22; *who hath alſo* ſealed *us, and given the* Earneſt (in the Original it is, the *Pledge* or *Token*) *of the Spirit in our Hearts*: And, 2 *Tim.* ii. 19; *The Foundation of the Lord ſtandeth ſure, having this* Seal, *The Lord knoweth them that are his*, and, *Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt, depart from iniquity.*

There is one thing more upon this Head, which deſerves particular obſervation, wherewith I ſhall conclude: And That is, that following the Guidance of the Spirit, is not following Enthuſiaſtick Imaginations; but taking Care to obey the Doctrine, which the Spirit inſpired. The *Apoſtles* were directed by a miraculous Aſſiſtance of the Spirit, upon every particular Occaſion: But we have *Now* no promiſe of any ſuch miraculous direction: Obeying the Spirit *Now*, is nothing elſe but obeying his Dictates, as ſet down in the inſpired Writings: And to enable us to do This, we *may*, upon our ſincere endeavours, expect his continual bleſſing and aſſiſtance.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

Of the Power and Authority of CHRIST.

[*Preached on Trinity-Sunday.*]

St MATT. xxviii. part 18, 19, 20.

All power is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth: Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt: Teaching them to obſerve all Things whatſoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always even unto the End of the World.

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OUR Saviour in his laſt Diſcourſe with his Diſciples *before* his ſuffering; after he had inſtituted the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and was going out with them towards the *Mount of Olives* in order to be betrayed; and had warned them of their approaching Sorrow, ch. xvi. 31; *All ye ſhall be offended becauſe of Me this Night; for it is written, I will ſmite the Shepherd, and the Sheep of the Flock ſhall be ſcattered abroad*; proceeds in the next Verſe to allay their Grief, and ſupport them againſt Deſpair, by giving them a remote proſpect of Light after Darkneſs, and of Comfort that ſhould ſucceed That melancholy Scene: *But after I am riſen again*, ſaith he, *I will go before you into Galilee.* What he intended to *Do* in *Galilee*, he did not then think fit to explain to them more diſtinctly; But *Galilee* being the place wherein they had uſed to converſe moſt freely with him, and where they had with pleaſure heard the greateſt part of his divine Diſcourſes, it gave them a general Hope or Expectation, that after the preſent Time of Trouble, and after their leaving *Jeruſalem* the conſtant place of Perſecution; when he ſhould

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be riſen again, (the *meaning* of which, whether it was literal or only figurative, they ſeemed not then fully to underſtand; but when it were fulfilled,) they thought they ſhould again converſe with him freely and ſafely, in their antient places of retirement in *Galilee*.

After his Reſurrection, This Promiſe was renewed and confirmed to them, by the Angel appearing to the Women at the Sepulchre, and ſaying, *Mar.* xvi. 7; *Go, —— tell his Diſciples,—— that he goeth before you into Galilee; there ſhall ye ſee him, as he ſaid unto you.* And the *Fulfilling* of it, is recorded in the words immediately before the Text; *Then the eleven Diſciples went away into Galilee, into a Mountain where Jeſus had appointed them; And* there *they ſaw him,——and* he *ſpake unto them.* What it was that he ſpake unto them; or what the Deſign was, of his meeting them there; St *Luke* tells us, *Acts* i. 2; He *gave Commandments unto the Apoſtles whom he had choſen*, and *ſpake* to them *of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God*; He gave them full inſtructions concerning the Nature of his ſpiritual Kingdom, which before his Reſurrection they did not rightly underſtand; and, in ſeveral Converſations during the Forty Days between his Reſurrection and Aſcenſion, he furniſhed them with all proper Directions relating to the Doctrine of the Goſpel, which they were to preach and propagate over the whole World. A Summary or ſhort Abridgment of which Inſtructions, is delivered down to us in the Words of the Text: *All Power is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth: Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt: Teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the End of the World.*

The words contain in brief, the whole Syſtem of Chriſtian Doctrine: And, for Method's ſake, we may obſerve in them diſtinctly the following particulars; 1*ſt*, *An Account of the* Extent, *of our Saviour's Power*; that he is inveſted with All *Power*, both *in Heaven and Earth*. 2*dly*, A Declaration, of the *Original* of that unlimited Power and Authority; *All Power*, ſaith he, *is* given *me*, *i. e.* from the *Father*. 3*dly*, The *Commiſſion* he thereupon grants his Diſciples; *Go* Ye *therefore*, and *teach all Nations*; 4*thly*, The *Doctrine*, which all Nations were to be taught, and into which they were to be Baptized; *Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt*. 5*thly*, The *Practice*, of thoſe who were to be Baptized into this Faith; *Teaching them to* obſerve all things *whatſoever I have commanded you*; And Laſtly, The *Promiſe of effectual Aſſiſtance*, to the Diſciples ſent forth upon This Commiſſion; *And lo, I am with you always, even unto the End of the World.*

1*ſt*, Here is an Account, of the *Extent* of our Saviour's Power and Authority; that he is inveſted with All *Power*, both in *Heaven and Earth*. The *Jews*, in their expectations of the Meſſiah, imagined to themſelves the Character of a Temporal Prince, who ſhould deliver them from the Yoke of their Enemies, and reduce all the World under their Dominion; who ſhould *ſubdue the People under them, and the Nations under* their *Feet*: who ſhould *chooſe out an Heritage for* them, *even the Excellency of Jacob whom he loved*; Pſ. xlvii. 3. And *This* indeed our Saviour *has* begun, and will continue to accompliſh; ac-
Iſ. ix. 6. cording to the *True Intent* of the Prophecy, though not after the manner of *Their* Interpretation. *Unto* Them, though they know it not, *a Child is born*; *unto* Them, *a Son is given*; *and the government Is upon his Shoulder*; *and his Name is Wonderful, Counſellor, The Mighty God*; (Not, *the everlaſting Father*; For it is the *Son* here ſpoken of, and *not* the *Father everlaſting*; But) the Go-
Luc. i. 33. *vernour*, the *Father or Lord of the Age to come*, (ſo the Phraſe ought to be rendered;) *The Prince of Peace*: *And he* ſhall reign *over the Houſe of Jacob for ever, and of his Kingdom there ſhall be no end.* The *Jews*, at the time of our Lord's appearing in the Fleſh, were extremely diſappointed and prejudiced againſt him; becauſe his *ſeeming* Meanneſs fell ſo much ſhort of that Grandeur, wherein they expected their Meſſiah ſhould have ſhown himſelf: And yet in reality his *True* Power and Authority was as much Superiour even to that *ex-*

pected

pected Grandeur; as his ſeeming Meanneſs, for which they deſpiſed him, was inferiour to it. They expected a *Temporal* Deliverer, and he propoſed to them a Salvation *Eternal*: They looked for a Prince of *Men*, and he appeared to be the Lord of *Angels*: They expected a Meſſiah endued with *great* Power on *Earth*, and he ſhowed himſelf to be inveſted with *All* Power both in *Earth and Heaven*. Thus did the Wiſdom of God put to ſilence the Ignorance of fooliſh men; And while the Lovers of Worldly Grandeur deſpiſed and reviled our Lord for his appearing Meanneſs; under that Meanneſs there lay concealed, and to all well-diſpoſed Perſons (who looked for Redemption in *Iſrael*) there diſcovered itſelf a Power, infinitely ſuperiour even to the higheſt Expectations, of thoſe whoſe Hearts were bent on nothing but Worldly Greatneſs. *O the depth of the Riches both of the Knowledge and Wiſdom of God! How unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!* Our Saviour, as he miniſtred to the Father in *creating the World*; (For by Him, the Scripture declares, *God created all things*;) So in *governing the* World, he likewiſe *ſupports all things by the Word of his Power*. He does what he pleaſes, *in the Armies of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth*; He is *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*, ; and judges, puniſhes, or rewards, as he pleaſes: *For as the Father raiſes up the dead, and quickneth them; even ſo the Son quickneth whom he willeth*; St. Joh. v. 21; He *ſearches the Hearts and Reins, and declares that he will give to every man according to his Work*, Rev. ii. 23. He *hath the Key of Hell and of Death*, Rev. i. 18; *the Key of David, that openeth and no man ſhutteth, and ſhutteth and no man openeth*; Rev. iii. 7. The Words are of the ſame import with thoſe in *Job*, ch. xii. 14, where compleat and irreſiſtible Power is thus deſcribed; *Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again; he ſhutteth up a man, and there can be no opening*: And they are an Application of that antient Prophecy, to our Saviour; *Iſ.* xxii. 22: *The Key of the Houſe of David will I lay upon his ſhoulder; ſo he ſhall open, and none ſhall ſhut; and he ſhall ſhut, and none ſhall open.*

And This, as it is a full Declaration of the *Extent* of our Saviour's Power, that it is *univerſal*, All *Power* both *in Heaven and Earth*; which was the 1*ſt* particular obſervable in the Text; ſo it leads us in the 2*d* place, to the Conſideration of the *Original* of this unlimited Power and Authority. I *will lay upon his ſhoulder the Key of the Houſe of David*. I will inveſt him with *All Power*, ſaith God in *the Prophecy*; And, at the Accompliſhment *of the Prophecy*, All Power is *Given unto me*, ſaith our Saviour in the Text; *i. e.* given unto me *by the Father*. Underived Power, is peculiar to the Perſon of the Father; the incommunicable Property of Him alone, *who is made of None, neither created, nor begotten, nor proceeding*, nor in any manner whatſoever derived from Another. All Power is derivative from *Him*; derivative from the Father, to the Son; and from the Son, by the Spirit, to all Creatures. In our Saviour therefore, is veſted all Dominion and Authority; becauſe *in Him dwelleth the Fulneſs of the Godhead*, (the Fulneſs of Divine Power, the Glory of the Father,) bodily, *viſibly*, as in the Perſon of a Man: And therefore he is ſtiled, *the* Image *of the* inviſible *God*; becauſe (as the Apoſtle expreſſes it,) *it pleaſed the Father, that in him ſhould all Fulneſs*, the Fulneſs of all Power, *dwell*. This is, in a moſt lively Figure, repreſented to us by the Prophet *Daniel*, ch. vii. 13; *I ſaw in the Night-viſions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, came with the Clouds of Heaven, and came to the Antient of Days, and they brought him near before him; And there was* given *him Dominion, and Glory, and a Kingdom; that all People, Nations and Languages ſhould ſerve him; His Dominion is an everlaſting Dominion, which ſhall not paſs away; and his Kingdom, that which ſhall not be deſtroyed.* And the Expreſſions in the New Teſtament, wherein is recorded the *Fulfilling* of this Prophetick Viſion, are exactly agreeable to it. The Angel at the Annunciation, thus declares concerning him, before his Conception, *He ſhall be great, and ſhall be called the Son of the Higheſt; and the Lord God ſhall* give unto him *the Throne of his Father David; and he ſhall reign over the Houſe of Jacob for ever*, Luke i. 32. Concerning *Himſelf* he profeſſes accordingly, *Matt.* xi. 27; *All*

SERM. IV. *things are* delivered unto me *of my Father*: And again, *Joh.* xiii. 3; *Knowing that the Father had* given *all things into his hands*: And yet more expreſsly, *Joh.* v. 22; *The Father judgeth no man, but hath* committed *all judgment unto the Son*: *and* ver. 26; *As the Father hath Life in himſelf, ſo hath he* given *to the Son to have Life in Himſelf*; *And hath* given *him Authority to execute judgment alſo, becauſe he is the Son of Man*: and ver. 19; *Verily I ſay unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himſelf, but what he ſeeth the Father do; for what things ſoever He doth, theſe alſo doth the Son likewiſe.* In the ſame manner with theſe declarations of our *Lord* concerning *himſelf*, do the *Apoſtles* alſo ſpeak of Him in their Epiſtles. *Whom God hath* appointed *Heir of all things*, ſaith St *Paul*, Heb. i. 2: and ch. ii. 8; *Thou haſt* put *all things in Subjection under his Feet.* And ſtill more largely and particularly, *Phil.* ii 9; *Wherefore* God *alſo has highly* exalted *him, and* given *him a Name which is above every Name; that at the Name of Jeſus every Knee ſhould bow*, (ſhould become ſubject to His Dominion,) *of things in Heaven, and things in Earth, and things under the Earth; And that every Tongue ſhould confeſs* (in acknowledgement of That Subjection,) *that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father*; and *Eph.* i. 20; *he* raiſed Chriſt *from the dead, and* ſet *him at his own Right hand in the heavenly places; Far above all Principalities and Powers, and Might and Dominion, and every Name that is named, not only in this World, but alſo in that which is to come*; *And hath* put *all things under his Feet, and* gave *him to be the Head over all things to the Church.* And accordingly upon account of this derivation of our Lord's Power, by way of Delegation from the Father, it is, that the ſame Apoſtle declares; 1 *Cor.* xv. 24; that at *the End, he ſhall deliver up* again *the Kingdom to God, even the Father, when he ſhall have put down all Rule and all Authority and Power*: *For —— when he ſaith, All things are put under him, it is manifeſt that He is excepted, which did put all things under him: And when all things ſhall be ſubdued unto him, then ſhall the Son alſo himſelf be ſubject unto Him that put all things under him, that God* (even the Father) *may be all in all.* It may here juſtly be thought a Difficulty, how in *This* place it is declared, that our Lord ſhall at *the End deliver up the Kingdom to the Father*; and yet in *other* Paſſages before-mentioned it is expreſsly affirmed, that *he ſhall rule for* ever, *and of his Kingdom there ſhall be* no *End.* But the Anſwer is obvious; that, when it is ſaid, *his Kingdom ſhall have no End*, and that *it is a Kingdom which ſhall* never *be deſtroyed*; the meaning is, that it ſhall never be prevailed over by any *oppoſite* Power, but ſhall ſubdue all things to itſelf; In which Sub-
1 Cor. xv. 27. jection of *all things* to him, it is yet manifeſt that *He* cannot be included, by whoſe original Power they were *All* made ſubject to him: But as our Lord was at firſt ſent forth by the good Pleaſure of the Father, ſo unto Him ſhall he at laſt return again; and when, by the Power of Judgment committed unto him, he ſhall have *brought many Sons unto glory*, he ſhall, together with *Them*, deliver up again the *Power itſelf* alſo unto the hands of the Father, when he *preſents* them *faultleſs before the preſence of his glory*, and inſtates them in the eternal Kingdom of their heavenly Father: *In* which Kingdom of the Father, He himſelf ſhall continue to *reign* over them that are ſaved, as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, for ever and ever. The *Socinian* Writers, from theſe and ſome other the like Texts of Scripture, have *very unreaſonably* preſumed to collect, that our Saviour was no greater a Perſon than a mere Man, born of the Virgin *Mary* without any former Exiſtence, and exalted by the Power of God to this State of Dignity in Heaven: But This their Inference (I ſay) is *very unreaſonable*: For though the Derivation of our Lord's Power from the Father, muſt and ought to be acknowledged; that all Men's *confeſſing Jeſus to be Lord*, may be (as St *Paul* directs) *to the glory of God the Father*; yet from thoſe other Texts of Scripture, wherein it is affirmed that *by Chriſt God created all things*; that he was in the *Form of God*, before he appeared in *the Form of a Servant*; that he *was with God*, and *had Glory with* God *before the World was*; from theſe Texts, I ſay, it undeniably appears, that our Lord's having *all Power* given him both in Heaven and Earth, cannot ſignify the *original* Exaltation,

altation, of One who had no Being before he was born of the Virgin; but the Exaltation of *Him* into the Form of God, who voluntarily emptied himſelf of that Glory he had *before*, and with unparallelled Humility took upon himſelf the Form of a Servant, and ſuffered in that Form for our Sake; and *Therefore* was *worthy to receive Power and Riches and Wiſdom, and ſtrength and Honour, and Glory and Bleſſing*, becauſe he *was ſlain, and Redeemed us to God by his own Blood, out of every Tongue and Kindred and People and Nation.* SERM. IV. Rev. v. 9. 12.

3*dly*, The next thing obſervable in the Text, is the *Commiſſion* our Saviour grants his Diſciples, upon his having received all Power in Heaven and Earth: *Go* Ye therefore, *and Teach all Nations.* The Word, therefore, is the Aſcertaining of *Their* Authority, from the Security of his *own*. All Power is given unto *Me*; Go *Ye* therefore, and teach all Nations. This particular is more fully expreſſed by St. *John*, ch. xx. 21; *As my Father hath ſent me, even ſo ſend I you —— whoſoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whoſoever Sins ye retain, they are retained:* Not that the Apoſtles were intruſted with any Power, to pardon or condemn any Man according to their *own Pleaſure*: For *This* even our Saviour *himſelf*, does only according to the Will of the Father which ſent him: But the meaning is, that they were intruſted to preach *That* Doctrine of Repentance, by the Terms of which it was to be determined, *whoſe* Sins ſhould be pardoned and *whoſe* retained. A like Expreſſion is uſed by our Saviour to St *Peter*, Mat xvi. 19; *I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; and whatſoever thou ſhalt bind on Earth, ſhall be bound in Heaven; and whatſoever thou ſhalt looſe on Earth, ſhall be looſed in Heaven:* Not that St *Peter*, or any, or All the Apoſtles, had Power to let whom they pleaſed into Heaven; but that they were appointed and commiſſioned to preach *That* Doctrine, by the Terms of which, Men were to be admitted into, or excluded out of Heaven.

Go *ye*, *and* Teach *all Nations*: The Word, *Teach*, ſignifies in the Original, *Make Diſciples*: In like manner, as *Acts* xiv. 21; *When they had preached the Goſpel to that City, and had* Taught *many*; in the Original it is, *and had made many Diſciples.*

Teach, All *Nations*: The words, *All Nations*, ſignify *primarily*, the Nations of the *Roman* Empire; and *then*, in a *larger* Senſe, all the Kingdoms of the World. In St *Mark* it is, *Preach the Goſpel to* every Creature. And, in the 1*ſt* Chapter to the *Coloſſians*, what in the 6*th* Verſe is expreſſed, the Goſpel came into *All the* World, is at the 23*d* Verſe ſaid to have been *preached to* every Creature under Heaven. The meaning of which is ſo obvious, that it would hardly need to be mentioned, but that it helps to illuſtrate a more difficult paſſage in the viii*th* to the *Romans*; where, when the Apoſtle had ſaid at the 21*ſt* Verſe, *The* creature itſelf *alſo ſhall be delivered from the bondage of Corruption, into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God:* He adds, ver. 23; *And not only* they, *but* ourſelves *alſo which have the* Firſt-fruits *of the Spirit, even* we ourſelves *groan within ourſelves, waiting for the Adoption, to wit, the Redemption of our Body.* So that the words, *Creature* or *whole Creation*, ſeem to ſignify thoſe many Nations, or the *Bulk* of Mankind, to whom the Goſpel was afterwards to be preached; in contra-diſtinction to the *Firſt-fruits*, who received it in the Apoſtle's Time. Rom. x. 18. Mark xvi. 15.

4*thly*, Here is the *Doctrine*, which all Nations were to be taught, and into which they were to be Baptized; *Baptizing them, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt.* This is that brief Summary of Chriſtian Faith, which, in the Apoſtle's Time, Men were taught, and profeſſed, and had explained to them at their Baptiſm; and the Explication of it was afterwards well expreſſed in that *Form of Sound Words*, which is now uſually called the *Apoſtle's Creed.* To be Baptized in the Name of the *Father*, is to profeſs our Belief (as St *Paul* words it) in the *One God and Father of all, who is Above All, and Through all, and In All*, even *the Father Almighty, the Maker*, and Lord, and Supreme Governour of all things. To be Baptized in the Name of the *Son*, is to profeſs our Belief likewiſe in the One Lord, *Jeſus Chriſt*, the only-

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only-begotten Son of God, the Meſſiah that was to come, the Redeemer and Saviour of Mankind, the Author and Purchaſer of Forgiveneſs to Sinners, or of the Acceptation of Repentance through his Blood; our great High-Prieſt or Interceſſor with God, and by the Appointment of the Father, our Judge at the laſt Day. To be Baptized in the Name of the *Son*, ſignifies alſo further, to be Baptized *into his Death*: *Know ye not*, ſaith St *Paul*, that ſo many *of us as were baptized into Jeſus Chriſt, were baptized into his Death?* Rom. vi. 3. And what *That* means, he tells us in the following verſe; *We are buried with him by Baptiſm into Death*, (that the Body of Sin might be deſtroyed, ver. 6;) *that like as Chriſt was raiſed up from the Dead by the Glory of the Father, even ſo We alſo ſhould walk into newneſs of Life. Laſtly*, To be Baptized in the Name of the *Holy Ghoſt*, ſignifies our Acknowledging the *Holy Spirit of God*, to be the Inſpirer of the Apoſtles and Prophets; the Comforter, and the Director of Chriſtians; that we ſubmit ourſelves to his Holy Guidance, receive the Doctrine inſpired by him into the Apoſtles and Prophets, expect to be juſtified from our paſt Sins by the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt, and to be preſerved from Sin for the future by his Sanctification and Aſſiſtance; that we obey his good motions, take great care not to grieve or quench and drive him from us; and, foraſmuch as *by one Spirit we are all baptized into one Body,——and have been all made to drink into one Spirit*, that therefore we endeavour by mutual Charity and Forbearance, to *keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*. This is the Meaning, of being *baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt*, with reſpect to the ſeveral *Offices* of theſe three Divine Perſons, in which Regard it is that the Scripture always ſpeaks of them: As to their *Metaphyſical Nature*; the Vanity of Men, ſpeculating about *That* beyond what is written, has been the Occaſion of many fooliſh Errors: Some have imagined three co-ordinate Beings, which is the Impiety of *Polytheiſm*, and directly contrary to that Fundamental Article, the Unity of God: Others have contended, that they are one Perſon only, with three Modes or Denominations; Which is the Hereſy of *Sabellianiſm*, and deſtroys the Perſonality both of the Son and Holy Spirit: Some, in the contrary extreme, forſaking likewiſe the Phraſes of Scripture, have preſumed to affirm, that there was a Time, when the Son and Holy Spirit had no Being, and were made out of Nothing even as the meaneſt of Creatures; which was the Notion of *Arius*: And Others, diminiſhing yet further the Dignity of our Saviour's Perſon, have made him a mere Man, and denied his having any Being before he was born of the Virgin; Which is the Error of *Socinus*. And now among this multiplicity of Errors, how ſhall a ſincere and unlearned Chriſtian behave himſelf? Why, His Rule is; Let him not follow vain Men, in being Wiſe beyond what is written; but let him adhere to what he finds plainly and expreſsly delivered in Scripture: And This, as far as poſſible, in the very Scripture-Terms; always remembering, where That cannot be done, yet ſo to underſtand all Phraſes of humane Compoſition, as to mean neither more nor leſs than the Scripture-Expreſſions. Now that which the Scripture declares concerning this Matter, is This: When one of the Scribes asked our Saviour, *Which is the firſt Commandment of all? Jeſus anſwered him, The firſt of all the Commandments is; Hear, O Iſrael, the Lord our God is one Lord*; To which the Scribe replied, *Well, Maſter thou haſt ſaid the Truth; For there is One God, and there is none other but He*; Mar. xii. 29, 32: and 1 Cor. viii. 6; *To Us there is but One God, the Father, of whom are all things:* and Eph. iv. 6; *One God and Father of All, who is above All, and through All, and in you All.* Yet the ſame Scripture does likewiſe expreſsly affirm, that the *Son* alſo is God; and to the *Holy Spirit* it aſcribes Divine Powers and Attributes: How Then ſhall This be reconciled? Plainly Thus: The Power and Authority, of the Son and Holy Spirit, is neither *Another* Power and Authority, *oppoſite* to that of the Father; nor *Another* Power and Authority, *co-ordinate* to that of the Father; But it is *His* Power and Authority, communicated *to* Them, manifeſted *in* them, and exerciſed *by* them: And ſo there is plainly preſerved both an Unity of Power, and a Monarchy of Government in the Univerſe.

Col. ii. 12.

Joh. iii. 3, 5.

1 Cor. vi. 11.

Tit. iii. 5.

1 Cor. xii. 13.

5thly

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5thly, To the *Form* of Baptism, our Saviour adds in the Text, the *Practice* of those who are to be baptized into This Faith. *Teaching them to* Observe *all things whatsoever I have commanded you.* And This, is the Great End and Use of the whole. As *Faith* without *Works* is dead; so *Baptism*, without *the Answer of a good Conscience towards God*, is but the *Washing away of the Filth of the Flesh.* He that is Baptized, must *put off, concerning the former Conversation, the Old Man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful Lusts; and be renewed in the Spirit of his Mind; and put on the New Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness*; Eph. iv. 22. He must, as St *Paul* elsewhere expresses it, *put on the Lord Jesus Christ.* Gal. iii. 27; *As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have* put on *Christ.* The Meaning is: He that is Baptized into the Religion of Christ, must conform himself to the same pattern, must *observe all things whatsoever* He *has commanded Us*, must obey his Laws delivered in the Gospel; otherwise his Baptism is vain, and his Profession but Hypocrisy.

1. Pet. iii. 21. Heb. x. 22. Eph. v. 26. Rom. xiii. 4.

6thly, and *Lastly*, Here is the *Promise* of an *effectual Assistance*, to the Disciples sent forth upon This Commission: *And, lo, I am with you always even unto the End of the World.* Being *with them always*, 'tis evident did not signify his continuing *personally* with them; For this Promise was made to them at the very Time, when he had declared he was about to leave them and *ascend unto the Father.* But it signifies, that he would continue with them *by* the guidance and direction of *his Spirit*; which was in effect the same thing, as continuing with them *himself.* Thus God is in Scripture said to dwell in us *Himself*, when he dwells in us *by his Spirit*; and he that lies to the *Spirit of God*, is justly accused of lying consequently to *God Himself*; and he who rejects the preaching of an *Apostle*, is charged with rejecting *Christ*, and he that rejects *Christ*, with rejecting *God Himself* who sent him.

Eph. ii. 22. Acts. v. 4.

Christ's being with his Disciples *to the End of the World* therefore, is his being with them *by his Spirit.* And This imports *two* things: *1st*, His giving them the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, to inspire them with the Doctrine of Truth, and to enable them to confirm that Doctrine with miraculous Gifts; according to the promise; St. *Mar.* xvi. 17; *These Signs shall follow them that believe; In my Name shall they cast out Devils, they shall speak with* new tongues, *they shall take up Serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the Sick, and they shall recover.* And *2dly* it implies, That, after this Foundation of the Church, by the Teaching and Miracles of the inspired Apostles; the Blessing of Providence, and the Assistance of the Divine Spirit, should continue to preserve it; not by raising up infallible Guides and unerring humane Authority, which never was in any Others than the Apostles themselves; but by supporting the Doctrine once delivered by the Apostles, against all the Violence and Frauds of its Opposers. *Thou art Peter*, says our Saviour, that is, a Rock; *and upon this Rock will I build my Church, and the gates of Hell, i. e.* Persecution and even *Death* itself, (for so the words properly signify,) *shall not be able to prevail against it*; Matt. xvi. 18. And what is meant by St. *Peter's* being a Rock, or Stone, upon which the Church is built, is explained, *Eph.* ii. 20; where the Church is compared to a Building, the Apostles to Foundation-stones, and our Saviour himself to the Head of the Building: *Ye are built*, saith St. *Paul, upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone; In whom all the Building fitly framed together, groweth unto a Holy Temple in the Lord; In whom you also are builded together, for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

SERMON V.

Of the different Gifts of the Spirit.

[*Preached on Trinity-Sunday.*]

1 COR. xii. 4, 5, 6.

Now there are Diverſities of Gifts, but the ſame Spirit; And there are differences of Adminiſtrations, but the ſame Lord; And there are Diverſities of Operations, but it is the ſame God, which worketh all in all.

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IN theſe Words we have a diſtinct Account of three Divine Perſons, concerned in bringing about the Salvation of Men; and a brief Declaration of the Nature of their ſeveral Offices, in accompliſhing that great and merciful Deſign. There are in the *firſt* place Gifts of Miracles, of Signs and Wonders, for the Conviction of Infidels; and there are Gifts of Grace, of virtuous and holy Diſpoſitions, for the Sanctification and Improvement of Believers; And theſe are conſtantly aſcribed in Scripture to the *Spirit of God*, the Holy Ghoſt, the Comforter: *There are diverſities of Gifts; but the ſame Spirit.* There is in the 2*d* place a wonderful Oeconomy in the eſtabliſhment and Government of the Church: Mankind was to be redeemed from the Power of Satan, and the Repentance of Sinners made acceptable before God, and available to the obtaining of Pardon, conſiſtently with the Juſtice and Wiſdom and Honour of the Laws of God; by the offering up of a ſufficient Sacrifice, Oblation and Satisfaction, for the Sins of the Whole World: This Doctrine was to be revealed unto Men; and a Church gathered out of the whole World, of ſuch as ſhould embrace and obey this Revelation: An Order and Government was to be eſtabliſhed, for the propagating this Church and conveying down this Doctrine by a perpetual Succeſſion, even unto the End of the World: Perpetual

petual Interceſſion was to be made to God by a Sinleſs High-Prieſt, to make the Prayers of frail and ſinful Men acceptable in the Sight of Him, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity: A Reſurrection of the Dead was to be appointed, a final Judgment paſſed, and a juſt and impartial Retribution made to every Man according to his Works: And theſe things are all aſcribed in Scripture to the *Son of God*, even our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; who, before his Incarnation, was the Word of the Father, the Angel of his Preſence, the Brightneſs of his Glory, the expreſs Image of his Perſon; and after his Incarnation, was the Redeemer and Saviour, the Mediator and Interceſſor, the Lord and Judge of Mankind: *There are Differences of Adminiſtrations*, ſays the Apoſtle, *but the ſame Lord.* There is in the 3*d* and *laſt* place a Supreme and Abſolute, a ſelf-original, underived and independent Authority, from whence all theſe things primarily and originally proceed, and to which the Glory of them muſt finally and ultimately be referred: And this is in Scripture conſtantly aſcribed to *God*, even the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; who is the Firſt and Supreme Author of every good Gift; by whoſe good pleaſure, our Lord himſelf was ſent forth to redeem us; and the Holy Spirit given, to ſanctify us; *There are Diverſities of Operations, but it is the ſame God, which worketh all in all.* Or, as the ſame Apoſtle elſewhere expreſſes it; *Of him and through him and to him are all things, to whom be Glory and Dominion for ever.* This is the Account the Scripture gives us, of the ſeveral Offices of theſe three Divine Perſons. *There are Diverſities of Gifts, but the ſame Spirit; and there are differences of Adminiſtrations, but the ſame Lord; and there are Diverſities of Operations, but 'tis the ſame God that worketh all in all.* 'Tis *God*, by whoſe Supreme Authority every thing in the Univerſe is directed; 'tis the *Son of God*, by whom the Government of the Church in particular is adminiſtred; 'tis the *Spirit of God*, by whom all Gifts and Graces, for the Conviction of Infidels, and for the Sanctification of Believers, are diſpenſed. The *God and Father* of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the infinite and incomprehenſible Fountain of underived Majeſty, is the Spring and Original of all Good: The *Son of the Father*, is to Us the Author and Purchaſer, the Conveyer of all *Communications from* that inexhauſtible Fountain of Goodneſs; and by his Mediation and Interceſſion, the only Means of *Acceſs and Approach to* that Throne of otherwiſe inacceſſible Glory: The *Spirit of God*, ſent forth from the Father and the Son, is the immediate Diſpenſer and Diſtributer of thoſe Benefits, which the Father grants by the Interceſſion of the Son.

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This is what the Scripture clearly and expreſsly declares to us, concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In which Doctrine, becauſe there are ſome things difficult to be underſtood, and not needful to be explained; wherein the vain Curioſity of Men has often expoſed its own Weakneſs, and which profane and careleſs Perſons have wreſted (as they do other Doctrines) to their own Deſtruction; therefore this matter ought not to be frequently and ſlightly treated of; but upon the moſt ſolemn Occaſions, with the greateſt Care, and with the utmoſt Reverence. And upon ſuch Occaſions; ſince the whole ground and foundation of Chriſtian Religion, is the Belief of our Reconciliation to God, the Father and Supreme Lord of All, thro' the Death of his Son, and by the Influence of his Holy Spirit; and ſince *This is Life eternal, to know* Him who is *the only true God*, and to know *Jeſus Chriſt whom* he *has ſent*, and the *Spirit* by whom he worketh in us every good Work: Since This, I ſay, is the very Foundation of Chriſtian Religion; to have a right knowledge of Him who is the Creator of the Univerſe, and Supreme Lord of the whole World; of him, who is the Saviour and Redeemer of Mankind; and of him, who is the Sanctifier of the elect People, which is the Church of God: it is therefore very fit, that upon particular ſolemn Occaſions, This great Doctrine, which ought not to be frequently and ſlightly handled, ſhould with great Caution and Reverence be *explained* at Once: *Explained*; that is, not unfolded according to the preſumptions of human Imagination; but *declared* ſo far, as 'tis expreſsly revealed in Scripture; and ſo far forth, as 'tis therefore intelligible, becauſe it is revealed. For in Doctrines which are not made known

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1ſt, I ſhall conſider what is ſpoken in a *ſpeculative* manner concerning their *Nature*. And This part being that, wherein we are leaſt concerned, and which we are leaſt capable to underſtand; the Scripture is very brief in this particular: It being of much more importance that it ſhould be clearly revealed to us, what they are *Relatively to Us*, than what their Nature is *abſolutely in themſelves*. Yet even upon This Head we find in Scripture, as follows. Concerning the Nature of *God the Father*: that, agreeable to the Light of natural Reaſon, there is One Supreme Abſolute Independent Cauſe and Original of all things, Eternal, Infinite, All-Powerful, Self-Sufficient; the Maker and Lord of all things, himſelf derived from None, made of none, begotten of none, proceeding from none: *By* whom all Creatures material and immaterial, viſible and inviſible, animate and inanimate, rational and irrational, mortal and immortal, in Heaven and in Earth were made; by whom the Land and Waters, the Air and Sun and Stars, the Heaven and the Heaven of Heavens, and all things that are therein; Plants, and Beaſts, and Men; Angels and Arch-Angels; were *created* out of nothing: *From* whom the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter and Sanctifier of all Holy Men, *proceedeth* or is ſent forth: *Of* whom laſtly the Son himſelf, the Saviour and Redeemer of the World, in an ineffable manner, before all Ages was *begotten*. This is the Supreme Father and Lord of all, who dwelleth in Light inacceſſible; whoſe Majeſty, no Thought can comprehend; whoſe Glory, no Eye can behold; whoſe Power, no Strength can reſiſt; from whoſe Preſence, no Swiftneſs can flee; whoſe Knowledge, no Secrecy can conceal itſelf from; whoſe Juſtice, no Art can evade; whoſe Goodneſs, no Creature but partakes of. This is the God of the Univerſe, whom even the Heathen World has always acknowledged. This is the God of *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*; the God who brought the Children of *Iſrael* out of the Land of *Egypt*; the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things; to whom be Glory and Dominion for ever. But to proceed.

Concerning the *Nature* of the *Son*, That which the Scripture declares to us, (and otherwiſe than from Scripture we can have no Light, in matters of Revelation;) That which the Scripture, I ſay, declares to us, is this: That, in the Beginning, before the Foundation of the World, before all Ages, That Divine Perſon, who after and by his Incarnation became our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, had a Being in the Boſom of his Father, and was Partaker of his
John i. 1. Father's Glory. *In the Beginning was the Word*; *and the Word was with God*, i. e. was with the Father; *and the Word was God*, i. e. was Partaker of his Father's Glory, of his Divine Power and Authority, in Creating and Governing the World. The Reaſon why This Divine Perſon was ſtiled *the Word*, has been much diſputed by Divines; and various Opinions have at different Times prevailed. That which is moſt probable and moſt agreeable to the Scriptures, is, that he was ſo called, upon account of his being as it were the Mouth or Oracle of God, the Angel of his Preſence, the great Declarer of his Will, the Mediator between God and his Creatures; by and thro' whom, as all Creatures have Acceſs to God, and give Glory to him; ſo thro' him likewiſe are derived and conveyed all Communications of God to his Creatures. *In the Beginning was the Word*: That *Word*, which afterwards *was made Fleſh, and dwelt amongſt us*; to reveal to us with Authority the whole Will of God: That *Word*, concerning whom the ſame Author St

John

John thus ſpeaks in another place; when in his Viſion, ſeeing the *King of Kings* SERM.
and Lord of Lords, coming forth *in righteouſneſs to judge and to make War*, and V.
to *tread the Wine-preſs of the wrath of Almighty God*; he thus deſcribes him;
that *out of his mouth goeth a ſharp Sword*, and *his Name is called, The Word of* Rev. xix.
God; and ch. i. 16; he beheld *one like unto the Son of Man, out of* whoſe *mouth* 16.
went a ſharp two-edged Sword. Which Deſcriptions afford great Light to that 11.
paſſage of St *Paul* to the *Hebrews*, ch. iv. ver. 12; *The Word of God is quick* 15.
and Powerful, and ſharper than any two-edged Sword, piercing even to the divi- 15.
ding aſunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow, and is a diſcerner 13.
of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart. And this exactly anſwers the Deſcription our Saviour gives of *Himſelf*: *Rev.* ii. 23; *I am he which ſearcheth the Reins and Hearts.* Further, concerning the *Nature* of this Divine Perſon, the *Word* or *Son of God*, the Scripture adds; that he is *the only begotten of the Father*, and was in *Glory with* him *before the World* was; that he is the *Brightneſs of his* Father's *Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon, and upholding all things by the Word of his Power*; Heb. i. 3; That he is *the Image of the Inviſible God, the firſt-born of every Creature*: Col. i. 15; or, as he himſelf ſtiles himſelf: Rev. iii. 14; *the beginning of the Creation of God*; that is, who was before and above all things, being the firſt Principle and Head over all; Himſelf, deriving *immediately* from the Father only; (and, as to the manner of That, *who ſhall declare his generation?*) Whereas all other Things, all Creatures, were produced *mediately* by *His* Operation. For ſo St. *John* affirms expreſsly; *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made*: St. Joh. i. 2. And St. *Paul* ſtill more diſtinctly: *Col.* i. 16; *By him were all things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, viſible and inviſible, whether they be Thrones or Dominions or Principalities or Powers, all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things conſiſt.* If it be here demanded, how theſe two manners of Expreſſion are to be reconciled, that God only is the Creator of all things, and yet all things are ſaid expreſsly to be created by Jeſus Chriſt; St. *Paul* gives a clear and direct Anſwer: *Heb.* i. 2; By *his Son* God *made the Worlds*: and again, *Epheſ.* iii. 9; *Who created all things* by *Jeſus Chriſt.* To interpret theſe paſſages, as ſome have attempted to do, of a ſecondary and figurative Creation, the new Creation or Renovation of things by the Goſpel; is wreſting Texts by a forced and unnatural Senſe to ſerve an Opinion, when in their plain and literal Meaning there is no real Difficulty. For to conceive that God *created* all things at firſt by his Son, is no more contrary to Reaſon, than his *renewing* or *redeeming* all things by his Son; which is acknowledged by All. And if *it pleaſed the Father*, by Chriſt *to* reconcile *all things unto Himſelf, whether they be things in Earth or Things in Heaven*; as St. *Paul* expreſsly affirms, and all Men underſtand him to affirm it in the literal Senſe; there is no more reaſon to doubt, but in the literal Senſe likewiſe, it pleaſed the Father *by* Chriſt to *Create* all things for Himſelf; which is as expreſsly affirmed by the ſame Apoſtle. And even in the old Teſtament itſelf, thoſe paſſages which are ſpoken of Wiſdom, *Prov.* viii. 22; are by all antient Chriſtian Writers underſtood of God's creating the World by Chriſt: *The Lord poſſeſſed me in the beginning of his Way before his Works of old; I was ſet up from everlaſting, from the beginning, or ever the Earth was; When there were no Depths, I was brought forth; when there were no Fountains abounding with Water; Before the Mountains were ſettled, before the Hills was I brought forth; While as yet he had not made the Earth, nor the Fields, nor the higheſt part of the duſt of the World; When he prepared the Heavens, I was there; when he ſet a compaſs upon the Face of the deep; When he eſtabliſhed the Clouds above; when he ſtrengthened the fountains of the deep; When he gave to the Sea his Decree, that the Waters ſhould not paſs his Commandment; when he appointed the Foundations of the Earth; Then was I by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight.* If it be here further enquired, how thoſe Divine Attributes and Powers, which are aſcribed in Scripture to the Perſon of the Son, are conſiſtent with the Unity of God, which is

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the Foundation of all Religion both natural and revealed; the Anſwer is obvious; that the Divinity aſcribed to the Son, is not another, a co-ordinate Divinity; but the Power, the Majeſty, the Glory of the Father, communicated and derived to the Son. Could it be affirmed that there were two or more ſelf-originate, unbegotten, underived Principles; this would indeed deſtroy the Unity of God, and fundamentally ſubvert the very firſt Ground of Religion: But ſince the Glory of the Son is not originally his own Glory, but the Glory of the Father manifeſted in him, and derived to him, in a manner which neither we nor Angels perhaps can preſume to underſtand; it is manifeſt ſtill, that the *Monarchy* of the Univerſe, is hereby preſerved entire.

Concerning the *Nature* of the *Holy Spirit of God*, the Scripture ſpeaks very little in a Metaphyſical manner; nor gives any encouragement to the inquiſitiveneſs and vain Curioſity of human Speculation. Declaring only, that he is a Divine Perſon, proceeding or being ſent forth from the *Father*; and in other places called the Spirit of the *Son*, and ſaid to be ſent forth from *Him*. Into the manner of his Derivation therefore, we ought not to preſume to enquire; but be content with what the Scripture reveals to us, of his being in a ſingular manner, in a manner which we cannot preſume to underſtand or explain, *the Spirit of God*. Only, becauſe there have been ſome in theſe later Ages, who have denied the Being of this Holy Spirit, and have imagined it to be nothing but a mere Power or Attribute of God; it deſerves to be taken Notice of, that thoſe Scriptures, which ſpeak of him as being *grieved* at wicked Men; as making *interceſſion* for us, and *helping our* infirmities; as *dividing* ſpiritual Gifts *ſeverally, as he* pleaſes; as *ſpeaking, not of himſelf*, but what he *hears* or receives *from the Father*; theſe and numberleſs other Texts in the New Teſtament, do plainly declare Him to be, not a mere Virtue or Power, but a real Perſon diſtinct from the Father and the Son, and ſent forth from Both for the perpetual Government and Direction of the Church.

This is what the Scripture briefly declares to us in a *ſpeculative* manner, concerning the *Nature* of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt. And Happy had it been for the Church of God, if learned Men in all Ages had been content with what the Scriptures ſo declare, and had never entered further into Scholaſtick Speculations, from whence have ariſen Endleſs Diſputes, incurable Scepticiſm and infinite Uncharitableneſs.

2*dly*, There is in the 2*d* place that which is *Moral*, concerning the ſeveral *Offices* of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt with relation to *Us*. And here the Scripture teaches us, concerning the *Father*, that he, being abſolutely ſupreme over all, *made* the World by the Miniſtration of his Son, and *governs* it by a perpetual Providence, without which not a Sparrow falls to the Ground, or a Hair of our Head periſhes. That having Compaſſion upon ſinful Man, and reſolving to afford them the Grace of Repentance, he ſent his Son to take our Nature upon him, and therein to reveal his gracious Will; and delivered him up to an ignominious Death, that he might make Expiation and Reconcilement for our Sins; and raiſed him from the Dead by his mighty Power; and exalted him to his own right Hand; and appointed him to be the Judge of Quick and Dead; and has made all things ſubject unto Him; and by him reconciles all things unto Himſelf, both which are in Heaven, and which are in Earth: and has appointed a Kingdom of eternal Happineſs to them that ſerve and obey him; and will deſtroy the wicked with an everlaſting Deſtruction. This is the *Office* of the *Father*. Concerning the *Office* of the *Son*, the ſame Scriptures declare, that he, by the Appointment of the Father, is our Saviour, Mediator, Interceſſor and Judge; that having been in the Form of God, he emptied himſelf of that Glory, and willingly took upon him the form of a ſervant; and died, to make our Repentance available; and now ſits at the right Hand of God, to intercede for us; and governs the whole Church, according to the Will of his Father; and ſearches and tries the Hearts of Men at preſent, and will finally judge them according to their Works. Laſtly, concerning the *Office* of the *Holy Spirit*, the Scripture teaches, that having been the Inſpirer

Rom. iii. 25.
1 Joh. iv. 9, 14.
Acts v. 30.

ſpirer of the Prophets of old, teſtifying before-hand the ſufferings of Chriſt, and the Glory that ſhould follow; he was afterwards ſent forth in a more extraordinary manner, to be the Comforter and Director of the Apoſtles; to lead them into all Truth; to bring to their remembrance all things which our Lord had ſaid unto them; to ſupport them againſt the Power of the World; to inſtruct them what to anſwer to their Perſecutors; to be the great Witneſs of our Saviour's Reſurrection, by working Signs and Wonders and mighty Works, by inſpiring the Apoſtles with the Gift of Tongues, and dividing to their followers diverſities of Gifts, to every Man ſeverally, as might beſt ſerve the great end of their miniſtry: finally, to continue with all good Chriſtians even unto the End of the World, as the great Sanctifier of the Hearts of Men; aſſiſting them with his Grace, admoniſhing them with his Holy Influences, working with them and inſpiring them with his good Gifts, and helping the Infirmity of their Prayers with his own Interceſſion. This is what the Scripture teaches us *diſtinctly and ſeparately*, concerning the ſeveral Offices of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are alſo in ſome few places all mentioned *together*; as in the Form of Baptiſm, whereby we are dedicated to the Service of God, baptized into the Death of his Son, and given up to the guidance of his Holy Spirit: In the form of Bleſſing, wherein we are recommended by the Apoſtle to the Love of God, to the Favour of Chriſt, and to the Communion or Fellowſhip of the Holy Ghoſt: By St. *Paul* again: *Eph*, iv. 4, 5, 6; *There is one Spirit,——one Lord—— one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all:* And in the Words of the Text; *There are Diverſities of Gifts, but the ſame Spirit; and there are Diverſities of Adminiſtrations, but the ſame Lord; and there are Diverſities of Operations, but it is the ſame God, that worketh all in all.*

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2 Pet. i. 21.
1 Pet. i. 11.
Joh. xiv. 1 Cor. ii. 10.
1 Cor. xii. 11.
Eph. ii. 18. 1 Cor. viii. 6. 1 Tim. ii. 5.

It remains in the 3*d* and *laſt* Place, that we conſider that which is *Practical*, concerning the *Honour* due to the Perſon of the *Father*, and concerning that which is due to the Son and to the Holy Ghoſt. To the Perſon of the *Father*, is to be directed that abſolute and ſupreme Worſhip, by which he is acknowledged to be alone παντοκράτωρ, the Maker and Judge of all; by whoſe incomprehenſible Power, the World was created; by whoſe unerring Providence, the Univerſe is governed; by whoſe ſupreme Authority, our Lord was ſent forth to redeem Us; by whoſe good pleaſure the Holy Spirit is *given*, to ſanctify us; to whoſe Glory, every tongue *now* confeſſes that Jeſus is the Lord and to whom, *at the Conſummation of all Things*, our Lord himſelf ſhall deliver up the Kingdom, and become ſubject to *Him* that put all things under him, that God may be all in all: To *Him* we are to pray for Remiſſion of our Sins; and that our Repentance may be accepted, through the powerful Interceſſion of Chriſt our great High-Prieſt; and that our Hearts may be renewed by the Inſpiration of his Holy Spirit: and to *Him* we are to give continual Thanks, for his *original* and undeſerved Goodneſs in ſending his Son at firſt to be the Saviour of the World, and to be unto us a propitiation through Faith in his Blood; and for the *continuation* of that Goodneſs, in affording us the perpetual aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt.

Heb. xii. 23. Acts v. 32. xv. 8. 1 Theſ. iv. 8. Heb. ii. 4. 2 Cor. i. 22. v. 5. Phil. ii. 11. 1 Cor. xv. 24; xi. 3.

To the Perſon of the *Son*, there is due this peculiar Honour; that we offer up all our Prayers in his Name; (*whatſoever*, ſays he, *ye ſhall ask of the Father in my Name*, he will *give it you*, Joh. xv. 16;) that we rely upon his Merits, depend upon his Interceſſion, obey him as our Lord, love him as our Saviour, fear him as our Judge. That we acknowledge his great Condeſcenſion, in loving us and giving himſelf for us; in that, when he was *in the Form of God, he was not greedy of retaining that form, but* willingly *made himſelf of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeneſs of men; and being found in faſhion as a man, he humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Croſs*, Phil. ii. 6. For which Reaſon, as the Apoſtle adds in the Words immediately following, *God alſo has highly exalted him, and given him a Name which is above every Name; that at the Name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow, of things in Heaven, and things in Earth, and*

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things under the Earth; and that every tongue ſhould confeſs that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. And accordingly upon this Account, we find the higheſt Honour aſcribed to him both by Men and Angels: *Rev.* v. 8. *The four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb,——— and ſung a new ſong, ſaying, Thou art worthy ———; For thou waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed us to God by thy Blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation; ——— And I heard the voice of many Angels———, ſaying———, Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive power and riches and wiſdom and ſtrength and honour and glory and Bleſſing: And every Creature———heard I ſaying, Bleſſing and honour and glory and power be unto him that ſitteth on the Throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.* And ch. i. 5; *Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our Sins in his own Blood, and has made us Kings and Prieſts unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever.* This is the peculiar Addition of the Chriſtian Religion; that whereas before, *all men honoured the Father*, they ſhould now *likewiſe honour the Son:* St. Joh. v. 23. Which Honour paid to the Son of God, is *therefore* no diminution to the Honour of the Father, nor derogation from the *Monarchy* of the Univerſe; becauſe the Greatneſs and Dignity, the Divinity and Majeſty of the Son, is not contradiſtinct to, but derivative from, that of the Father; and conſequently muſt be acknowledged to that very End, that it may be (as St. *Paul* expreſsly declares) to *the glory of the Father.*

Laſtly, Concerning the Honour peculiarly due to the Perſon of the *Spirit*, that which the Scripture declares, is; that we acknowledge him to be the divine Inſpirer of the Prophets, both of the old and new Teſtament; and the immediate Worker of all thoſe Signs and Wonders in proof of the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, which are properly ſtiled the Witneſs and Teſtimony, the Power and Demonſtration of the Spirit; that he is alſo the Sanctifier of all Hearts, and the immediate Diſtributer of all the Gifts of God, for the Edification of his Church; that therefore we receive and believe his Teſtimony, as delivered in the inſpired Writings; obey his good Motions; be ſollicitous to obtain his Gifts and Graces; and infinitely careful not to grieve and quench and drive him from us, leſt we be found to do deſpite unto the Spirit of Grace; which is in Scripture repreſented as a more unpardonable fault, than offending againſt the Perſon even of our Saviour himſelf. But the Time allows me only to hint theſe things barely, and propoſe them to your Meditations; the enlarging upon which, would be to lay down the whole Syſtem of Divinity. God grant that every one of Us, may ſo give Honour to the Father of all things, through the Mediation and Interceſſion of his Son our Saviour, and by the Aſſiſtance and Operation of his Holy Spirit; that by the communion and fellowſhip of the ſame Holy Spirit, and thro' the Merits and Death of the Son of God making our Repentance available, we may be preſented faultleſs before the Throne of the Father of inacceſſible Majeſty, in the great Day.

Eph. v. 9. Gal. v. 22. v. 16. 1 Joh. ii. 27. Eph. iv. 30. 1 Th. v. 19. Heb. x. 29.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

Of the Desire of Knowledge.

[*Preached on Trinity-Sunday.*]

DEUT. xxix. 29.

The Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children, for ever, that we may do all the words of this Law.

THE Book of *Deuteronomy* contains a brief Summary, or Recapitulation of the Law; To which are added by *Moses*, several earnest and most affectionate Exhortations to the People of *Israel*, to perswade them to the Obedience and Observation of that Law. He tells them that *he hath set before them Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing, Good and Evil*; and he perswades them to chuse their *Duty, and cleave to it as their Life, and to refuse the Evil and flee from it as from Death.* He invites them to Obedience by the most affectionate Promises of the Love, and favour, and Protection of God; and he deters them from Disobedience by the most severe threatnings of utter destruction. He proposes to them the Law of God, as the proper subject of their constant Meditation; exhorting them *to bind it for a Sign upon their hand, and as frontlets between their Eyes; to write it upon the posts of their Houses, and upon their Gates; to teach it diligently unto their Children, and to talk of it when they sit in their Houses, and when they walk by the way, and when they lie down, and when they rise up*; Deut. vi. 7, 8. He tells them that *the Commandments of God are the things* revealed *to them, to be studied by them and by their Children for ever*; that the knowledge of other things, is in comparison either unnecessary, or more difficult at least, and less needful to be attained; and that therefore nothing could be more unreasonable, than to pursue the Knowledge of those things which were either wholly unnecessary, or at least far less needful to be

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known; by neglecting the study and the Knowledge of that, in which alone consisted their Happiness and their Life. *The Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our Children for ever, that we may do all the words of this Law.* The ultimate design and desire of Man, is Happiness; and as the only way to this Happiness is Religion, so the Knowledge of that Religion ought to be at least our principal and first study. Religion is the *doing all the Words of the Law, i. e.* the obeying of the Commandments of God; the Knowledge therefore of Religion, is the knowing particularly what are the Commands of God, and the knowing our Obligation to obey those Commands. He that hath gained so much Knowledge, as to understand the Commandments of God, and to convince himself of his *indispensable* Obligation to obey them; so as to live constantly *in* the sense and under the Power of that Conviction; The *Words of this Law*, are the Commandments of God; which he that has studied so as to Understand and and Practise them, is sufficiently knowing, though he were Ignorant of all other things, because he knows his Happiness which is his main Concern, and the way to attain it. He that is ignorant of this though he had all other Knowledge that were possible to be acquired either by Men or Angels, is yet miserably and foolishly Ignorant, because he is ignorant of that, which is indeed the only thing that is Necessary for him to know. A religious Man *may* lawfully divert his thoughts, and exercise his Industry, in other Speculations; but he will not so far engage his Curiosity, in the search after *secret* things, as to neglect those which are *open* and *revealed*, those on which the true Knowledge or Worship of God does any way depend. There are *some* Things, which are absolutely *beyond* the reach of our Faculties, and therefore not *possible* to be throughly understood by us; and these a good Man will not be Ambitious to discover, because he considers that God has placed them wholly out of the Sphere of our Capacity, and reserved the Knowledge of them as a Prerogative to himself. There are *other* things, which if we can come at all to the Knowledge of, it must be by unwarrantable or unlawful means; and these likewise a Religious Man will not be inquisitive to know, nor uneasy for want of that Knowledge; because he considers that God has hidden them from us, by forbidding the use of the means to discover them. There are also some *other* things, which are neither impossible nor unlawful to be known, but the Search after them is difficult, and the Discovery unprofitable; they neither promote the true Knowledge, Honour, and Worship of God, nor the Benefit of Mankind; and these, a pious Man, will not be too much sollicitous to find out; because they would take up too much of that Time and those Meditations, which may be *more* usefully employed on the things that God has revealed. *Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed, belong unto us, and to our children for ever.* From the words I shall observe these three things; 1*st*, That there is naturally in Men, a very strong Desire of Knowledge; 2*dly*, That this Desire, ought to be regulated and limited by the Condition of our Nature, and by the Word of God; and 3*dly*, That not to regulate our Desire of Knowledge by these Rules, may be a very great occasion of Sin.

I. There is naturally in Man a very strong Desire after Knowledge. 'Tis the peculiar Attribute and Prerogative of *God*, to be infinitely perfect; and to be Originally and unchangeably so. All *created* Beings, as far as we can judge of them, arrive at that Perfection which is the highest piteh and excellency of *Their* Nature, by *degrees*; and they have always in themselves a Natural and earnest Tendency towards that Perfection. In things void of Reason and Knowledge, the Perfection of *Their* Nature is nothing else, but a compleat Number, a due Proportion, and a regular Composition of parts; and *Their* Natural tendency towards this Perfection, is nothing but that Disposition which arises from the necessary Qualities of Matter, and from the fixed laws of Motion. But in Creatures endued with Reason and Understanding, the Perfection of *their* Nature consisting principally in the Improvement of those

more

more excellent Faculties; 'tis manifest *They* can aspire to what degree they please, and are apt to extend their Desires without limit. *I gave my Heart*, saith *Solomon*, *to seek and search out by Wisdom, concerning all things that are done under Heaven.* And the Scripture declares concerning him, *that he had Wisdom and Understanding exceeding much, and largeness of Heart even as the Sand that is on the Sea-shore; so that before him was none equal to him, neither after him should there arise any like him.* And yet even *He*, by departing from the study of the Law of God, and giving heed to strange Women, was a sad Example of falling from God in his latter Days. Wherefore, though there *be naturally* in Men a very earnest Desire after Knowledge, yet I add, SERM. VI.

II. This our Desire of Knowledge, ought to be *regulated and limited*, by the *Condition* of our Nature and by the *Word* of God.

1st, We ought not to be Ambitious of That Knowledge, which the *condition* and *circumstances* of our Nature make it impossible for us to obtain. Knowledge is so amiable a Perfection, that Men will not readily be perswaded, they can possibly be too earnest in the pursuit of it; even though it be in things which have no relation to the Honour of God, or to the Good of Men. 'Tis true, God hath given us Faculties, which we not only *may* but *ought* to improve; but then we must always remember, that our Desires ought to terminate in *such* possible and useful Perfections, as are to be attained by the Improvement of the Faculties God has given us. Wisdom indeed *is* the principal thing, says *Solomon*, *therefore get Wisdom, and with all thy getting get Understanding*; Prov. iv. 7; and ch. xviii. 15; *The heart of the Prudent getteth Knowledge, and the ear of the Wise seeketh it.* But by *Knowledge*, *He* always means *religious* Wisdom, and not that which terminates only in *Pride* and *Vanity*; much less, that which by Nature we are not made capable of attaining. In which respect, a Man's Desire after Knowledge may become faulty, either when he desires the Knowledge of such a *kind* of things, as the nature of the things does not permit him at all to understand; or when he desires such a *sort* of Knowledge of any thing, as the nature of his Faculties does not capacitate him to come up to. There are some *kinds* of things, of so abstruse a Nature, or at such a distance of Place or Time, or which have so little connexion with That Knowledge of God and of ourselves, on which our whole Duty depends; that they are altogether beyond the reach of our Faculties; so that we cannot possibly understand them at all; and in respect of *these* things, 'tis evident we ought *so* to limit our Desire of Knowledge by the *condition* and *Circumstances* of our Nature, as not to attempt to understand them at all; and not to pretend that we *can* understand them, when indeed we can *not*. Of *other* things, which we can and ought to know according to the measure of our Faculties, there is yet such a *sort* or degree of Knowledge as we cannot arrive to; and we have no more reason to murmur, that we cannot attain to this *Degree* of Knowledge, than we have to be displeased, that God has not made us equal to the highest Orders of Angels; or than the Angels have cause to be angry, that God has reserved some Attributes incommunicable from himself, and has not made *them* Masters of all Perfections. God hath communicated to every sort of Creatures, such Perfections as himself pleased; and the condition of each of their Natures is the Law of God, by which they ought every one to limit and regulate their Desires. In matters of *Religion* indeed, in order to frame right Notions of God, and to serve him acceptably; we can never be too sollicitous and careful in enquiring into the Truth: But *some* Secrets there are, the Knowledge of which God hath reserved to himself; and the highest Angels cannot presume to look into them: And without question Angels have a clear Knowledge of many things which humane Abilities cannot without the utmost folly pretend to discover. Remarkable to this purpose is that Expostulation of God with *Job*; *Hast thou entered into the springs of the Sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the Depth? Have the gates of Death been opened unto thee; or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of Death? Where is the way where Light dwelleth? and as for Darkness,*

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where is the place thereof? Knoweſt thou it becauſe thou waſt then born? or becauſe the number of thy days is great? ch. xxxviii. ver. 16. The Meaning is, *Not* that Men may not commendably inquire into the Operations of Nature, which are the Works of God; ſo far as they have Faculties and Opportunities to do it; But that they ought to contain their Deſire of Knowledge within the bounds of thoſe Faculties, and not be proud and imperious, *intruding into things which they have not ſeen, and vainly puffed up by a fleſhly mind.*

2*dly*, As we ought not to be ambitious of what it is *impoſſible* for us to attain; ſo neither ought we to be ſollicitous after that, which it is unlawful for us to deſire. And here, that which the Scripture determines in reſpect of our Deſire after Knowledge, is this; 1*ſt*, That we ought not to endeavour to penetrate into things too deep for us, ſuch as are the *hidden and ſecret counſels, or unrevealed decrees of God.* True Notions of God, as diſcoverable by Reaſon, and the full Meaning of his whole revealed Will; theſe things we can never be too inquiſitive after: But what cannot be known clearly by Reaſon or Revelation, concerns us not. *Secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed, to us and to our children for ever. Vain men would be wiſe*; Job xi. 12; *intruding into thoſe things which they have not ſeen, and deſiring to impoſe them upon others, But can we by ſearching find out God? Can we find out the Almighty unto Perfection? It is as high as Heaven, what canſt thou do? deeper than Hell, what canſt thou know?* Job. xi 7, 8: And Acts i. 7; *It is not for you to know the times or the ſeaſons which the Father hath put in his own power*, 2*dly*, The Scripture further forbids the deſire of that Knowledge, the *means* of obtaining which are unlawful, The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, appeared to our Firſt parents *to be pleaſant to the Eye, and a Tree to be deſired to make one wiſe*; Gen. iii. 6. But ſince God has expreſsly forbidden them *to taſte of the Fruit of that Tree*, having reſerved it as a ſingle inſtance of Homage and Acknowledgment to Himſelf, as being the Creator and Lord of Paradiſe; 'tis evident the Deſire of that Knowledge, which they thought the eating of that Fruit would furniſh them with, was at leaſt the Occaſion and the Cauſe of their Sin. In like manner, the ſame Deſire of *ſuch* Knowledge, as God has not afforded us the means of acquiring; has ſince in all Ages of the World, through the deceit and temptations of the Devil, put vain and ſuperſtitious perſons upon ſuch courſes and means to attain it, as God has abſolutely and expreſsly prohibited. 3*dly*, The Scripture forbids us *ſo* to ſearch after the Knowledge of any thing elſe whatever, as in the too earneſt purſuit of *that*, to neglect the ſtudy of the Law of God. Thoſe divine Truths, which influence our practice, which furniſh our minds with worthy Notions of God, and charitable Diſpoſitions towards our Neighbours, and *make Men wiſe unto Salvation*; are the things which God has propoſed to us to converſe with and meditate, to fix our thoughts and our ſtudies upon. In *other* things *There* is *a wiſdom*, ſaith the Wiſe Man, *that multiplieth bitterneſs*; *and there is a Knowledge which bringeth nothing but wearineſs.* To ſtudy the works of God and Nature *ſo*, as therein to admire and adore the Wiſdom of their Almighty Creator; to ſtudy and ſearch out the great Truths of Religion in ſuch a manner, as thereby to be perſwaded to conform our practice *in earneſt* to the Rules of the divine Law; *this* only is truly worthy of a Man, and acceptable to God; *this* only is a ſtudy which will yield us *preſent* Satisfaction and *future* alſo; which will afford us the trueſt Contentment *now*, and the ſolideſt and moſt ſubſtantial Joy *at the laſt*. *David* found ſuch Satisfaction in this Contemplation of the Works and of the Law of God, that he declares he could entertain himſelf with the Meditation of God's Law all the day long, *and in the* night *ſeaſon alſo he could think upon the ſame*, Pſal. cxix, 55; and *Solomon*, who had given his Curioſity the moſt unbounded liberty, and had beyond compariſon the largeſt extent of Knowledge that was ever attained by any mortal Man; *whoſe Wiſdom compaſſed the whole Univerſe, and his Underſtanding and largeneſs of Heart was exceeding great, even as the ſand upon the Sea-ſhore*; this great Man (I ſay,) when he came ſeriouſly to compare all things that he had obſerved

obſerved, and to conſider the laſt Iſſue of things, he concludes all his Medi- SERM. tations with this wiſe Reflection, *Eccleſ.* xii. 13; *Let us hear the concluſion of* VI. *the whole matter*; *Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the* whole; the whole Duty, and the whole Happineſs of Man. It remains that I proceed now in the

III. *Third* place, to ſhow how great a *Sin* it is, not to regulate our Deſires of Knowledge, by the forementioned Rules. And *1ſt*, To determine dogmatically in things not clearly revealed, and to take delight in *impoſing* upon each other ſuch Determinations, is in effect directly oppoſing and ſtriving againſt that Order and Conſtitution of things, which God has appointed; and endeavouring to make *ourſelves* what God has *not* made us. Inſtead of being thankful for thoſe Faculties and Capacities, which God has freely endued us with, it is ungratefully murmuring againſt him, becauſe he has not given us every thing that our unreaſonable Fancies may ſuggeſt to us to deſire, but has left us great occaſions for Modeſty, for mutual Charity and Forbearance. We are made capable of knowing and imitating our great Creator, and of being made happy by that Knowledge and that Imitation; and is not this ſufficient for us, unleſs we be admitted alſo to determine with peremptorineſs, and to *impoſe* upon each other our own Opinions concerning thoſe Secrets, which infinite Wiſdom has not thought fit to reveal clearly to us? All other created Beings contain themſelves willingly within the bounds of their Natures, and cheerfully move within the limits of the ſphere that God has preſcribed them; except ſinful Men, lovers of Power, and inſolent towards each other; and excepting alſo thoſe Apoſtate Spirits, *who kept not their firſt eſtate, but having revolted from God, are reſerved in chains under darkneſs unto the judgment of the great day.* That a proud aſpiring after ſomething not attainable by them in thoſe Circumſtances wherein God had created and placed them, was the cauſe of theſe Angels Fall, the Scripture frequently intimates to us; As in that Alluſion of the Prophet *Iſaiah*, *ch.* xiv. ver. 12; *How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the Morning?—— For thou haſt ſaid in thine heart, I will aſcend into Heaven, I will exalt my Throne above the Stars of God, I will ſit alſo upon the mount of the Congregation, in the ſides of the North; I will aſcend above the heights of the Clouds, I will be like the moſt High; yet thou ſhalt be brought down to Hell, to the ſides of the pit.* Which though applied indeed in that place by the Prophet to the King of *Babylon*, yet the Alluſion ſeems to be borrowed from ſome greater and higher Event. What it was in particular, that this Pride prompted thoſe wicked Spirits to aſpire to, the Scripture does not expreſsly acquaint us; But ſince we cannot conceive that they could aſpire to the Power and Majeſty of God, which it was impoſſible they could be ſo weak as to imagine it could be aimed at by any created Being; it is probable their Crime might be the aſpiring proudly and imperiouſly to ſome degree or kind of Knowledge, which God had with-held from them. 2*dly*, The not regulating this Deſire by the fore-mentioned Rules, was the occaſion of our Firſt Parents Fall. This appears from the deſcription of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil: *Gen.* iii. 6; *When the Woman ſaw that the Tree was good for food, and that it was pleaſant to the Eyes, and a Tree to be deſired to make one wiſe* or knowing, *ſhe took of the Fruit and did eat.* It is alſo evident from the deſcription of the manner of the Temptation: *ver.* 5; *God doth know*, ſaith the Tempter, *that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes ſhall be opened, and ye ſhall be as Gods, knowing Good and Evil.* The Temptation propoſed, was the *Knowledge of Good and Evil*; and That which principally prevailed upon the Woman to eat of the Fruit of the Tree, was its appearing deſirable to make one wiſe. *What* is here meant particularly by the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the Scripture does not directly explain to us. That it was not the Knowledge of any particular *ſort* of Good and Evil, is evident; For ſince the Underſtanding of our Firſt Parents, as all their other Faculties were much more perfect *before* than *after* the Fall, it is evident they could not but have a perfect Knowledge of all *natural* Good and Evil, and a right

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Understanding concerning the Nature of all *moral* Good and Evil; excepting only the *experimental* Knowledge of both these sorts of Evil, which it is impossible to suppose could be a Temptation. It remains therefore that the Knowledge of Good and Evil, with which our First Parents were tempted, was not the Knowledge of any particular *things*, but some particular *kind* or *manner* of knowing them: Possibly a Desire of *fore-knowing* things to come; or some other such *sort* of Knowledge, as in the present state and Circumstances of their Nature they were not capable of attaining. *3dly* and *lastly*, A Desire of Knowledge not regulated and limited by the Rules before set down, is very apt to put Men upon unlawful practices, to attain what they so desire. For that which is not to be attained but by sinful and unwarrantable Practices, the *Desire* of it cannot but be *also* sinful. What remains therefore, is by way of inference to apply what hath been said; and by giving some particular instances, to reduce to practice what has been discoursed in general, concerning our Desire of Knowledge and the Limitations of it.

And *1st*, From what has been said, it follows, that the vain Desire of knowing beforehand things to come, is such a Desire of the Knowledge of secret things, as is not permitted us by the present Circumstances and condition of our Nature, or by the Word of God. It is the peculiar Attribute of God, and not communicable to any finite Being, to foreknow all things that *shall* be, before they come to pass; and therefore the Prophet, when he would expose the Vanity of worshipping Idols or false Gods, challenges them to foretel future Events; *Let them bring forth their strong reasons, and shew us what shall happen; shew the things that are to come hereafter; that we may know that ye are Gods*: Is. xli. 22 and 23. Yet because the power of Beings superiour to us, is great and unknown: vain and superstitious Men have therefore in All Ages been too apt to be seduced with Imaginations of the possibility of such Discoveries. In the times of Heathen Darkness and Ignorance, the Devil by giving sometimes doubtful and ambiguous Answers, which to be sure should be interpreted to the truest sense, which way soever the Event might happen to determine it; and sometimes by giving such dark and obscure Oracles, as, though no Man could make any sense of them, yet they insensibly filled Mens Minds with an awful respect and Veneration for the Author of them; by these means, I say, the Devil enslaved the *Gentile* World, and kept them in a constant course of Idolatry. Or, if most of these things were, as is probable enough, only the Frauds of wicked and profane *Men*, to impose upon the Ignorant; yet still the Event was much the same, in abusing their Credulity and unjustifiable Desire of Knowledge, to confirm them in their Idolatrous Practices. The *Jews*, who by the Knowledge of the true God and the Discovery of his Will made to them in the Law, were in a great measure freed from the bondage of such Superstitions; yet whenever they fell away from God, and began to neglect his Worship and distrust his Providence, one instance of their Disobedience presently was, having recourse to unlawful ways of Enquiry after Knowledge. Thus when the Lord would not answer *Saul* because of his Disobedience, immediately he betakes himself to a Method, which *Moses* tells the *Israelites* was one of those Abominations, because of which *the Lord thy God doth drive the Nations out from before thee*; *For these Nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkned unto Observers of times, and unto Diviners*, Deut. xviii. 10. And among *Christians* it is observable, that those always who have least Knowledge of God, and least Trust in his Providence, and least Understanding in the true System and Powers of Nature, have the greatest Confidence in groundless Pretences and unwarrantable Methods of pursuing Knowledge. It matters not, that the Pretences to supernatural ways of knowing things, are commonly mere Cheat and Fraud; it is a degree of this Sin, if Encouragement be given to such false Pretences. And to pretend to know things by the *Stars*, which introduces Fatality and destroys Religion; is not much different from pretending to know them by Arts that have worse Names.

2dly,

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2*dly*, From what hath been said it follows, that a Desire of prying into the hidden and unrevealed Decrees, Counsels, and Purposes of *God*, and desiring to impose upon Others our Opinions concerning them; is also such a Desire of the Knowledge of secret things, as is not permitted us by the Law of our Nature, or by the Word of God. The measure of our Knowledge of divine things, is That revelation which God has been pleased to make to us in his Holy Scripture; This, we can never study with too much care and exactness; But whatever pretends to go beyond these bounds, is presumptuous and unwarrantable. Those things which God has revealed to us, we may know, because God has discovered them to us; and we are *bound* with all diligence to search after the Knowledge of them, because they are proposed to us as the Rule of our Life, and the condition of our Happiness. *More* than God has made known to us of this kind, we *cannot* discover; and to pretend to understand, and confidently impose upon each other what God has not thought fit clearly to reveal, is no less foolish and absurd, than it is unreasonable and sinful. *For who has known the Mind of the Lord, or who hath been his Counsellor?* Rom. xi. 34. Only in general this *one* thing we may depend upon as certain, that no secret Counsel or Purpose or Decree of God can be contrary to his Will revealed in his Word. Upon what conditions God has appointed that Men should be happy or miserable, he has clearly and fully revealed to us in his Holy Scriptures; and more than this, it is neither necessary nor possible for us to know.

3*dly* and *lastly*; An over-earnest Desire of knowing things subtle and unnecessary to be known, so as in the pursuit of the Knowledge of these things, to neglect the Study of that which more nearly concerns us; is also a sort of that search after Knowledge which is forbidden in the Scripture. Whatever hath no relation to the Honour and true Worship of *God*, and promotes not righteousness and Charity among *Men:* Whatever tends not *so* to inform our judgments, as to rectify our Practice and reform our lives, is useless and unprofitable. Let us then in the first place endeavour to attain that Knowledge which may make us wise unto Salvation; and always so regulate our enquiries after other things, as not to neglect the Study of that, which is our Interest and our Life. I conclude with the words of the wise Son of *Sirach:* Ecclus. iii. 21; *Many are in high places and of renown; but mysteries are revealed to the meek. Seek not out the things that are too hard for thee, nor search the things that are above thy strength: But what is commanded thee, think thereon with reverence; for it is not needful for thee to see with thine Eyes the things that are in secret.*

SERMON VII.

Of the Teſtimony of our SAVIOUR'S Doctrines.

[*Preached on Trinity-Sunday.*]

1 JOHN. v. 8.

And there are Three that bear Witneſs in Earth, the Spirit and the Water and the Blood; And theſe Three agree in One.

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THE Words of the foregoing Verſe, which have no relation to the Argument the Apoſtle is here inſiſting upon, I ſhall not take into conſideration at this Time; for a Reaſon now well-known to all who carefully ſtudy the Scriptures, and not needful to be mentioned in This place. But confining my Diſcourſe to the Words of the Text itſelf, I ſhall *1ſt* endeavour to explain diſtinctly, their *connexion* with the whole Thread of the Apoſtle's Reaſoning in this Chapter; and *2dly*, I ſhall conſider, the *Doctrine particularly contained* in the *words themſelves*.

I. In the *firſt Verſe* of This Chapter, St. *John* lays down the *General Doctrine*, which is the Subject of this whole Epiſtle: *Whoſoever* (ſays he) *believeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt, is born of God.* To be *born of God*, ſignifies by an eaſy Figure of Speech, to be what the Scripture calls a *Child of God*, *a regenerate Perſon*, one that *loves God, and keeps his Commandments*; living in the habitual Practice of univerſal Virtue and Righteouſneſs. And *ſuch* a perſon is every one, who *believeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt*: Not, every one who *profeſſes* to believe, but who *does* believe: Not, every one who *pretends* to be, but who *really is*, a *ſincere Chriſtian*. The *reaſon why* the Apoſtle expreſſes ſincere Chriſtianity

anity by this particular phraſe of *believing that Jeſus is the Chriſt*, is becauſe there were even Then ſome falſe Apoſtles, in whom *the myſtery of iniquity did already work:* Who taught, that *Jeſus* was not indeed the *Chriſt*: That *Chriſt*, the *Son of God*, was not indeed incarnate, was not *made Man* and *ſuffered* for us *really*, but *in appearance only*: That *Jeſus*, the perſon born of the Bleſſed Virgin, was not *himſelf* the *Chriſt*, the *Son of God*; but that *Chriſt*, the *Son of God*, was *another perſon*, fictitiouſly and *in Name only* united to *Jeſus who was the Son of Man*. Againſt Theſe falſe Teachers, the Apoſtle argues through this whole Epiſtle; ch. ii. 22; *Who is a Liar, but he that denieth that Jeſus is the Chriſt?* From the Context it appears evidently, that he is not there arguing againſt profeſſed Unbelievers, but againſt pretended Chriſtians, who denied the reality of our Lord's Incarnation. Again, ch. iv. 1; *Beloved, believe not every Spirit*, (that is, every Prophet or Teacher,) *but try the Spirits whether they are of God; becauſe many falſe Prophets are gone out into the World: Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; Every Spirit that confeſſes that Jeſus Chriſt is come in the Fleſh*, (that is to ſay, that the Son of God was really incarnate and made Man for us,) *is of God: And every Spirit that confeſſeth not, that Jeſus Chriſt is come in the Fleſh; is not of God.* Again, 2 *Epiſt.* v. 7. *Many deceivers are entred into the World, who confeſs not that Jeſus Chriſt is come in the Fleſh.* And in the 4*th* ch. of this 1*ſt* Epiſtle, ver. 15; and ch. v. 1, 5; the Phraſes, *to confeſs that Jeſus is the Son of God*, to *believe that Jeſus is the Chriſt*, and to *believe that Jeſus is the Son of God*, are All uſed in the *like* Senſe, to expreſs the *reality* of the Incarnation of the *Son of God*, and that he *truly and perſonally*, (not in *Appearance and Name* only,) became the *Son of Man*. Hence, through this whole Epiſtle, theſe and the like Expreſſions are conſtantly to be underſtood as ſignifying *True and Sincere Chriſtians*. And therefore, I ſay, the *General Doctrine*, laid down by St *John* in the *firſt* Verſe of this Fifth Chapter, (and the Subject-matter indeed of the whole Epiſtle,) is This; that *every ſincere Chriſtian* is a *regenerate perſon*, one that *loves God and keeps his Commandments*; living in the habitual Practice of univerſal Virtue and Righteouſneſs.

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On the other ſide: Whoſoever *loves God*, and deſires to *keep his Commandments*, and is diſpoſed to become a *regenerate perſon*; will hardly fail of being ſincerely a *Chriſtian*: For ſo the Apoſtle goes on in the *latter part* of the *firſt* Verſe; *Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth Him alſo that is begotten of Him*; Every one that ſincerely loves *God*, every one that is of a good and virtuous Diſpoſition, will naturally love the Religion of *Chriſt*. And, that no Man might miſtake, *wherein* this Love of God conſiſts; he defines it in expreſs Words, ver. 3; *This*, ſays he, *is the love of God, that we keep his Commandments: and his Commandments are not grievous.* And the *Reaſon why* his Commandments are not grievous, is *becauſe* (ſays he, ver. 4.) *whatſoever is born of God, overcometh the World*; A true Child of God, a ſincere Chriſtian, will deſpiſe and *conquer* all the Temptations of a ſinful and debauched World. And the *Means*, by which he is *enabled* to conquer theſe Temptations, is *Faith*; *This is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our* Faith: Our *Faith*, our firm *Belief*, of the *Being and Government of God*, and of his having *appointed a day wherein he will judge the World in Righteouſneſs*; this is what will not fail to prevail over the Temptations, of a wicked and debauched World. And becauſe it is by the Revelation of *Chriſt*, by the Doctrine and Preaching of the *Goſpel*, that this Faith or firm Belief of a future Judgment is principally eſtabliſhed in the Minds of Men; therefore in the 5th Verſe the Apoſtle proceeds to explain this Faith in the following manner; *Who is He that overcometh the World, but he which believeth that* Jeſus is the Son of God? that is, that he is the True Meſſiah which was to come into the World, the Perſon appointed to be the Judge of Quick and Dead.

That This is plainly the Meaning of the Phraſe, appears from the parallel places wherein the Scripture expreſſes the ſame Senſe in other Words. Thus what in this 5*th Verſe* is, *believing that Jeſus is the* Son of God; is in the 1*ſt* Verſe, *believing that Jeſus is* the Chriſt. And St. *Peter*'s Confeſſion, which in St. *Mat-*

SERM. VII. *thew's* words, ch. xvi. 16; is, *Thou art Chriſt the* Son of the Living God; is, in St. *Mark's* words; ch. viii. 29; *Thou art the* Chriſt. Again: The Queſtion put to our Lord by the High-Prieſt, which in St. *Matthew's* words, ch. xxvi. 63; is, *whether thou be the Chriſt the* Son of God; is, in St. *Luke's* words, ch. xxii. 67; *Art thou* the Chriſt? And *Nathanael*, in *His* Confeſſion, *Joh.* i. 49, uſes theſe two, as known Synonymous Expreſſions; *Rabbi, thou art the* Son of God, *thou art the* King of Iſrael.

The *Faith* therefore, which, St *John* here tells us, *overcometh the World*; is the believing that *Jeſus* is the *True Meſſiah*, the perſon appointed of God to be the Judge of Quick and Dead. Which Truth whoſoever is firmly perſwaded of, will not eaſily ſuffer himſelf to be overcome by the Temptations of *Sin*, which he knows will expoſe him to the final Wrath of God at That Great Day.

Wherefore This *Faith*, this *Belief* that *Jeſus is the Son of God*, that he is the Perſon by whom God will judge the World in Righteouſneſs; This, I ſay, being a Matter of ſo great importance, a Doctrine on which the Whole of Religion depends; the Apoſtle proceeds to tell us, *ver.* 6; that our Lord did not *barely affirm* this of himſelf, but came with powerful *Evidence and Proof*, with ſufficient and undeniable *Witneſſes* of ſo important a Truth: *This is he that came*, ſaith he, *by Water and Blood, even Jeſus Chriſt.* He *Came*; that is, he manifeſted himſelf to be the True Meſſiah, and made it appear that he was really ſent of God. For Thus the Meſſiah is deſcribed, in the Queſtion put by *John Baptiſt's* Diſciples to our Saviour; *Matt.* xi. 3; *Art thou he that ſhould* Come, *or do we look for Another? Before* his appearing, his Title was, *He that ſhould Come*; And *after* it, the Apoſtle here ſtiles him accordingly, *This is he that Came.* He came, *declaring* himſelf to be ſent from God, as his Son, the Chriſt, the Judge of the World; and *proving* the Truth of what he affirmed by the *Evidence* of *Three* concurring *Teſtimonies*, The *Water*, The *Blood*, and The *Spirit: This is he that came by Water and Blood, even Jeſus Chriſt; not by Water only, but by Water and Blood; And 'tis the Spirit that beareth Witneſs, becauſe the Spirit is Truth.*

The Words, *not by Water only, but by Water and Blood*; ſeem to be an *Alluſion* to what the ſame Apoſtle St. *John* records in his *Goſpel*, that, when our Lord's ſide was pierced, *forthwith there came out Blood and Water:* But it ſeems to be an Alluſion *only*; the Words in this place, having a different Senſe; and referring no otherwiſe to thoſe in the *Goſpel*, than as the Blood and Water there mentioned are recorded as an Evidence of the Reality and Certainty of our Lord's *Death*: Which *Death*, or voluntary *laying down of his Life*, the ſame Apoſtle here in his *Epiſtle*, alledges as *One Teſtimony* of the Truth of our Lord's Doctrine, ſtiling it *the Blood.*

By *Three concurring Teſtimonies* therefore, diſtinctly recited in the *ſixth Verſe* did our Lord *prove* himſelf to be the True Meſſiah. And becauſe they are the Three *Great* and moſt *undeniable* Evidences, that gave Teſtimony to our Lord and to the Truth of his Doctrine; therefore the Apoſtle *repeats them again*, (as it were by way of *recapitulation* of the Summ of his Argument,) in the Words of the Text, ver. 8; *There are Three that bear Witneſs, the Spirit and the Water and the Blood; and theſe Three agree in One:* They are One concurring or agreeing Teſtimony. *And if we receive the Witneſs of Men*, ſays he, ver. 9; (that is, if *Two* Witneſſes were in the Law ſufficient Evidence of any Matter of Fact among *Men*;) *The Witneſs of* God *is greater*; this *Threefold* Teſtimony which God has given to the Truth of the Doctrine of Chriſt, is ſtill *more certain and undeniable.*

The *End* and *Deſign*, for which this Doctrine of the Goſpel was preached by Chriſt, and thus *atteſted* of *God*; is ſet forth, ver. 11; *And This is the Record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this Life is in his Son*: Which words are of the ſame import with thoſe of our Saviour himſelf in the *Goſpel* of St. *John*; *This is Life eternal, that they may know Thee the Only True God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent.*

The

The *Application* of the Whole, follows, ver. 18; *We know*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *that whoſoever is Born of God, ſinneth not.* And *why* doth ſuch a one *not Sin?* Even becauſe *the Son of God is come*, ver. 20; *and hath given us an Underſtanding that we may know Him that is True*; that is, he hath *taught* us *how* the *True God* will be acceptably ſerved and obeyed: *And we* are accordingly *in Him that is true*, (we *do* accordingly ſo obey and ſerve the True God,) *in* his Son, that is, *by* or *through his Son Jeſus Chriſt*: *This*, ſays he, *is the True God, and eternal Life.* SERM. VII.

II. And now, having explained diſtinctly the Connexion of the Text, with the whole Thread of the Apoſtle's Reaſoning in this Chapter; I proceed in the *ſecond* place to conſider the *Doctrine contained, particularly* in the *words themſelves*: *There are Three that bear Witneſs, the Spirit, and the Water, and the Blood.* The Order in which they are ranked in the *Sixth* Verſe, is the true Order of Nature; the *Water*, the *Blood*, and the *Spirit*; And in That order, I ſhall diſcourſe upon them.

Firſt therefore; The *firſt* of the Three great Teſtimonies here recorded by St. *John*, as given to the Truth of our Saviour's Miſſion and Doctrine; is That which he ſtiles *The Water.* His Meaning is; *That Teſtimony*, which God gave to our Lord in ſo very remarkable and illuſtrious a manner at the Time of his *Baptiſm*: Matt. iii. 16; *And Jeſus when he was baptized, went up ſtraightway out of the Water; and lo, the Heavens were opened unto him, and he ſaw the Spirit of God deſcending ——upon him: and lo, a Voice from Heaven, ſaying, This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed.* St. *John*, in his *Goſpel*, anſwerable to the Streſs here laid upon it in his *Epiſtle*, enlarges very particularly upon *This Teſtimony*; alledging the Account given of it by *John the Baptiſt* in the following manner; ch. i. 31; *I knew him not; But that he ſhould be made manifeſt to Iſrael, therefore am I come baptizing with Water: And John bare Record, ſaying, I ſaw the Spirit deſcending from Heaven,——and it abode upon him: And I knew him not; But he that ſent me to baptize with Water, the ſame ſaid unto me, Upon whom thou ſhalt ſee the Spirit deſcending, and remaining on him, the ſame is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghoſt; And I ſaw and bare Record, that this is the Son of God.* Again; ch. iii. 26; The ſame Teſtimony is referred to by the *Jews*, diſcourſing with *John the Baptiſt*, and ſaying; *Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bareſt Witneſs.* And again, by *our Saviour* himſelf; ch. v. 33, 37; *Ye ſent unto John, and he bare Witneſs unto the Truth: But I receive not Teſtimony from Man;——the Father himſelf which has ſent me, hath born Witneſs of me.* This therefore was the *Firſt* great Evidence of the Truth of our Lord's Miſſion; the Teſtimony given him at his aſcending out of the *Water*, when the Spirit deſcended viſibly upon him, and there came a Voice from Heaven, ſaying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleaſed.*

Secondly; The *next* that *bears Witneſs*, is what the Apoſtle here ſtiles *The Blood*: That is; our Lord's *laying down his Life* for a Teſtimony to the Truth of his Doctrine, joined with the *Circumſtances preceding* and *attending* his *Death*. He did not only *preach* that he was the Son of God, and by his Holy and Exemplary *Life* juſtified his integrity in what he ſaid: But he *died* alſo, to make good his Doctrine; and, in his Death, was attended with many the ſtrongeſt circumſtantial Evidences of Truth. To his *Diſciples*, he frequently declared before-hand, that he ſhould be crucified and ſlain, and ſhould riſe again the third day. To the *Jews*, he propheſied long before his ſuffering, *Joh.* viii. 28; *When ye have* lift up *the Son of Man, then ye ſhall know that I am He; and that I do nothing of myſelf, but as my Father has taught me, I ſpeak theſe things.* To *Pilate*, he profeſſed, *Joh.* xviii. 37; *To This end was I born, and for This cauſe came I into the World, that I ſhould bear Witneſs unto the Truth.* This is what St. *Paul* calls, his *witneſſing before Pontius Pilate a good Confeſſion*, 1 Tim. vi. 13: And his ſtedfaſtneſs in it, cauſed even *Pilate himſelf* to teſtify, that the putting him to death, would be a ſhedding the *Blood of a juſt perſon*; Matt. xxvii. 24. The *particular Circumſtances* of his Death, were all of them the fulfilling of ſo many diſtinct Prophecies; In which it had been predicted, that he ſhould

SERM. VII. Zech. ix. 9. Iſ. l. 6. Pſ. lix. 21. Pſ. xxii. 8. ——— 18. Pſ. xxxiv. 20. Zech. xii. 10.

be *ſold for thirty pieces of Silver*; that he ſhould be *ſcourged, buffeted and ſpit upon*; that he ſhould have *Gall and Vinegar* offered him to drink; that they who ſaw him crucified, ſhould *mock* at his *truſting in God*; that the Soldiers ſhould *caſt lots for his garments*; that not *a Bone of him ſhould be broken*; and that *they ſhould look on Him whom they* had *pierced*. Concerning all which Circumſtances, and particularly this Laſt, of the Soldiers *piercing* him with a *Spear*, and his being really dead without having any Bone broken; St. *John* thus declares, ch. xix. 35; *He that ſaw it, bare Record; and his Record is true.* Upon *Other Signs* following his Death, the *Centurion that watched him*, bore Witneſs, ſaying, *Truly This was the Son of God*, Matt. xxvii. 54. *After* his *Reſurrection*, (which was itſelf the Great Evidence of All;) his *Diſciples* ſealed likewiſe the ſame Teſtimony with *Their Blood*: Which is therefore ſtiled; *Rev.* xvii. 6; *the* Blood *of the* Martyrs *of Jeſus*; That is, of thoſe *who were beheaded*; ch. xx. 4; *for the* Witneſs *of Jeſus, and for the word of God*; Or, as 'tis ch. vi. 9; *who were ſlain for the word of God, and for the* Teſtimony *which they held.* To which may be added, that even his *Enemies* alſo, who wiſhed that his *Blood* might *be on Them and on their Children*; even Their *blood* alſo was made a Witneſs to the ſame Truth, by the Vengeance that came upon them at the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem.*

Thirdly, The Third and Laſt Evidence or Witneſs to the Truth of our Lord's Doctrine, is the *Spirit.* And under This Head, are included *Many* particulars.

1*ſt*, The *whole Body* of *Prophecies* under the Old Teſtament: *To Him give All the Prophets witneſs*; Acts x. 43: And *Rev.* xix. 10; *The Teſtimony of Jeſus, is the Spirit of Prophecy*: So we render the Words: But the True Rendring is; *The Spirit of Prophecy, is,* [only] *the* Teſtimony, or the Witneſs, *of Jeſus.* For which reaſon 'tis expreſsly ſtiled by St. Peter, *The Spirit of* Chriſt *which was in the Prophets.*

2*dly*, The Purity and *Spiritual* nature of the *Doctrine itſelf* which he taught, and the *Innocency and Holineſs* of his *Life*; by means of which, he, as *a Lamb without blemiſh, offered himſelf, through the eternal Spirit, without Spot, unto God.*

3*dly*, The *Miracles* which he worked in his own life-time by the *Spirit of* of God: *Matt.* xii. 28; *If I caſt out Devils by the* Spirit *of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you*: And *Joh.* v. 36; *I have greater Witneſs than that of John*; *For the* Works *which my Father hath given me to finiſh the ſame* Works *that I do, bear Witneſs of me, that the Father has ſent me.*

4*thly*, His *Reſurrection* from the Dead: Concerning which, St. *Peter* tells us, that he was *quickened by the* Spirit; And St. *Paul*, Rom. i. 4; that he was *declared to be the Son of God with Power, according to the* Spirit *of Holineſs, by the Reſurrection from the Dead.*

Laſtly, The *Gift of the Holy Ghoſt*; which, according to his Promiſe, he ſent down upon the *Apoſtles* after his Aſcenſion. The *Promiſe* was, *Joh.* xv. 26; *I will ſend unto you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father*; *he ſhall teſtify of Me*: And the *Accompliſhment* is, *Heb.* ii. 4; *God bore them Witneſs, both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, according to his own Will.* So that, *with great Power gave the Apoſtles Witneſs of the Reſurrection of the Lord*, Acts iv. 33. *Him*, ſaith St. *Peter, hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour;*—*and We are his Witneſſes of theſe things*; *and ſo is alſo the* Holy Ghoſt, *whom God hath given to them that obey him.* Acts v. 31.

This therefore is the *Third* and *Laſt* Great Witneſs to the Truth of our Lord's Doctrine; *It is the* Spirit *that beareth Witneſs, becauſe the Spirit is Truth.* 'Tis this great *Variety*, this *manifold* Evidence, of the Works of the *Spirit*; which gives the moſt *undeniable* Atteſtation to the *Truth* of Chriſtianity. This is what St. *Paul* calls, *the Demonſtration of the* Spirit, *and of Power*, 1 Cor. ii. 4, *For our Goſpel*, ſaith he, *came not unto you in Word only, but alſo in Power, and in the* Holy

Holy Ghoſt, 1 *Theſſ.* i. 5. *Through mighty Signs and Wonders, by the Power of the* Spirit *of God*, Rom. xv. 19.

The Inferences I ſhall draw from what has been ſaid, are:

1*ſt*, If God has given us ſuch abundant Evidence of the Truth of Chriſtianity, as has been above ſhown; then from hence it appears, how inexcuſable thoſe are, who neglect to embrace it, when propoſed to them in its true and original Simplicity. In the manner *ſome* have mixt it up with humane Inventions; with their own unintelligible Doctrines, and corrupt Practices; it is no wonder indeed, that it has become a ſtumbling-block and an Offence. But as it was taught by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, in the native Purity of the Word of God; *no* heart of Man, that is willing to act the part of a *rational* Creature, can poſſibly withſtand its Evidence and Excellency. Only they who pretend to *embrace* it, and yet *diſobey* it; are, of the two, ſtill *more* inexcuſable. If we *receive* the Witneſs of God, which he has given us concerning his Son; we muſt make Evidence of the Truth and Sincerity of our *Faith*, by the Teſtimony of a ſuitable *Practice*. We muſt verify and make good our *Baptiſm*, *with Water*, by the *Purity and Holineſs* of a virtuous and Chriſtian Life. We muſt be content to be *ill-uſed* (if at any Time the Will of God be *ſo*,) and to *ſuffer many Indignities*, for adhering to and preferring before humane Inventions, the Simplicity of That Doctrine which our Lord and his Apoſtles atteſted with their *Blood*. We muſt take care to bring forth the Fruits *of the Spirit*, in all meekneſs, righteouſneſs, ſobriety and virtuous behaviour; Otherwiſe the Works *of the Spirit*, the ſeveral Manifeſtations of the Divine Power, will be of no Benefit to us.

2*dly*, If the Witneſſes to the Truth of Chriſtianity recited in the Text, were a *ſufficient* and *complete* Evidence and Atteſtation of that Doctrine which our *Saviour himſelf* taught; then from hence we may learn what to think of thoſe Evidences, which corrupt Men in after-Ages have alledged in Proof of *their own additional Doctrines*. The two principal Pretences of This kind, are That of the *internal Guidance of the Spirit*, and that of the *external Evidence of Miracles*. The *former* has been occaſionally claimed, by *Enthuſiaſts* of all Sorts: The *latter*, is the great and ſtanding Impoſture of *the Church of Rome*. Concerning the *former*, it is ſufficient to obſerve, that *Other Foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, even Jeſus Chriſt*: And that therefore the following of the *Guidance and Direction of the* Spirit of God, is not following *vain and enthuſiaſtick Imaginations*, but adhering to That Doctrine which God at firſt revealed by the *inſpiration of his Spirit*, and is now recorded in the *Holy Scriptures* written for our Uſe. Concerning the *latter*, namely the *Miracles* pretended to be worked in theſe latter Ages of the Church of *Rome*; That which the Scripture ſays of them, is This: *Matt.* xxiv. 24; *There ſhall ariſe falſe Chriſts, and falſe Prophets, and ſhall ſhow great Signs and Wonders*; — *Behold, I have told you before.* 2 Theſſ. ii. 9; *Whoſe Coming is after the working of Satan, with all Power and Signs and Lying Wonders; and with all deceivableneſs of unrighteouſneſs in them that periſh, becauſe they received not the Love of the Truth*, (i. e. the purity and ſimplicity of the Goſpel;) *and for This cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong Deluſion, that they ſhould believe a Lie.* And, to mention but one place more, with which I ſhall conclude: *Rev.* xiii. 13; *He doth great Wonders, and — deceiveth them that dwell on the Earth, by the means of thoſe Miracles which he had Power to do.* From which, and all Other Impoſtures and Deceits, &c.

SERMON VIII.

Of our SAVIOUR'S Temptation.

[*A Sermon preached in Lent.*]

MATT. iv. 1.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the Wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil.

SERM. VIII.

THE History of our Saviour's Temptation, is a portion of Scripture, in which there are several *Difficulties*, that deserve particular Explication; and upon which may be made several useful *Observations*, to direct us in our Own Practice.

1. In the *first* place, it may be inquired, *why* our Saviour, whom the Scripture elsewhere declares to have been *tempted in* all *points like as we are*, only *without Sin*; is yet by the Evangelists recorded, as having been tempted *only at This particular Time*: Then *was Jesus led up to be tempted. Then:* That is, as soon as he had been baptized. So St. *Mark* explains it, ch. i. 11, 12. At his Baptism, *there came a Voice from Heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: And* immediately *the Spirit driveth him into the Wilderness*

Wilderneſs. The Reaſon is, becauſe he *Then* began to enter upon his Office, of preaching the Doctrine of Salvation; *That Doctrine*, by which the Works and Kingdom of the Devil, the Power and Dominion of Sin over Mankind, was to be deſtroyed. *Before* This, we do not read of his being Tempted; becauſe his Life being private like that of other Men, his Temptations were ſo likewiſe, Sin only always excepted. Neither, *After* This, is there any mention of his being Tempted any *more*; becauſe the Tempter being at this Time thoroughly vanquiſhed, did not hereafter hope to prevail ſo much by *Tempting*, as by *Oppoſing and Perſecuting* him. The *proper* Time of Tryal, was juſt after his Baptiſm, at the firſt entring into his Office. And as the Tempter might reaſonably think *This* the likelieſt Seaſon, to aſſault him with Succeſs; ſo the Wiſdom of God knew on the contrary, that it was the fitteſt Time for his repulſing and triumphing over the Tempter. For this Reaſon the Text takes notice, that *Jeſus was led up* of the Spirit, that is, not by the Evil *Spirit*, but by the Good *Spirit* of God was he led up to his Temptation. So St. *Luke* expreſsly, ch. iv. 1; *Jeſus being full of the* Holy Ghoſt, *returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the Wilderneſs*. And indeed it is *obſervable*, that our Saviour, who *before* his Incarnation appeared to *Moſes and the Patriarchs* in *the Form of God*, that is, inveſted with the immediate Glory and Power of his Father; on the contrary, *all the time of his reſiding here upon Earth*, appeared [κενωθεὶς] diveſted of That Glory, being *made in the Likeneſs of Man*; and is accordingly repreſented through the whole Goſpel, as acting and working under the Conduct of the *Holy Spirit*; God having (as our Lord ſpeaks concerning Himſelf, *Joh.* iii. 34,) *given the Spirit unto him, not by Meaſure*.

2. It may be enquired, *why* our Saviour continued ſo long in the ſolitary Retirement of a *Deſart place*, and why he *faſted* through all that Space of Forty Days. As to his *Retirement in* general, and his *Faſting and Humiliation* during that Retirement; the Reaſon of it ſeems to have been, that he might prepare himſelf beforehand by *Meditation and Prayer*, for the executing of that Great Office which he was about to undertake. Thus *Moſes*, the Giver of the *Law*. Thus *Elijah*, the Head of the Antient *Prophets*. Thus *John Baptiſt*, the *Fore-runner* of our Lord, *before the day of his ſhowing unto Iſrael*; Luke i. 80. Thus the *Apoſtles* of our Lord, at the Time of their ſending forth *Paul and Barnabas* to preach, *faſted and prayed*; Acts xiii. 3. And, when they firſt *ordained Elders in every Church*, they *prayed with Faſting*, ch. xiv. 23. And our Saviour, admoniſhing his Diſciples concerning ſome extraordinary miraculous Gifts, with which they were to be endued; *This kind*, ſaith he, *goeth not out, but by Prayer and Faſting*; Matt. xvii. 21. In *ordinary* Caſes, it is to be underſtood by Us as a *Rule and Example* in proportion, that in undertaking any *Office*, and eſpecially any *Sacred Function*, we be not raſh and precipitate, careleſs, and full of *worldly* Thoughts and Deſigns; but that, withdrawing our Minds from the World, and attending ſeriouſly to the promoting of God's Glory, or the Intereſt of Truth and Virtue among Men, we beg the Divine Aſſiſtance to enable us, and by Meditation and Study ſtrengthen our own Reſolutions of being Diligent, and improve our Qualifications towards being more Succeſsful, in the Performance of our Duty.

As to the *particular Space of Time* wherein our Saviour faſted, which was *forty Days*; This was an Accompliſhment of thoſe antient Types, when *Moſes was with the Lord* in the Mount *forty Days and forty Nights, and did neither eat bread, nor drink water*; (Exod. xxxiv. 28:) and *Elijah*, (1 Kings xix 8;) *went in the ſtrength of the meat that he had eaten, forty Days and forty Nights, unto Horeb the Mount of God*. *Moſes*'s Faſt, was for the Sins of *Iſrael* in the Wilderneſs; *Deut.* ix. 18; *I fell down before the Lord forty Days and forty Nights, I did neither eat bread, nor drink water, becauſe of all your Sins which ye ſinned, in doing wickedly in the ſight of the Lord, to provoke him to Anger*. *Elijah*'s Faſt, was for the Idolatry of *Iſrael* in the days of the Kings; 1 *Kings* xix. 13; *There came a voice to him, ſaying, What doſt thou here, Elijah? And he ſaid, I have*

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been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts; because the Children of Israel have forsaken thy Covenant, thrown down thine Altars, and slain thy Prophets with the Sword. These Types therefore of the *Giver of the* Law, and of the *Chief of the* Prophets, our Saviour who came to *fulfil the Law and the Prophets*, to fulfil all *Legal*, as well as *Moral* Righteousness, and to be an *Expiation* for the *Sins* of the *whole World*; thought fit to accomplish. And possibly even in his Own *Fast* also of forty Days, there might still be something typical, and prophetical, For, as it was told to *Ezekiel* in his Vision; ch. iv. 6; *Thou shalt bear the iniquity of the House of Judah forty Days, I have appointed thee each Day for a year:* And as the Prophet *Jonah* prophesied of *Nineveh, yet forty Days and Nineveh shall be overthrown*; (which, though in the *literal* Sense it was deferred upon their Repentance, yet in the Accounts of prophetical computation it was really fulfilled, as is intimated at the conclusion of the book of *Tobit*:) So 'tis very observable, that God *suffered the Manners* of the *Jews in the Wilderness* (upon whose Account *Moses*'s Fast was kept; God bore with them, I say, in the Wilderness) *forty years*, in the Time of that Great *Provocation*; Acts xiii. 18; and Ps. xcv. 8, 9, 10. And from the Time of our Saviour's Death to the final Destruction of *Jerusalem*, the same impenitent Nation had again the same Space allowed them of forty Years.

The *Use* of such Observations as these, is, to show the exact *Connexion* there is, between the several prophetical *Types* made use of in Scripture, and the *Events* to which those Types have relation. The comparing of which one with another, is a confirmation of the Truth of the inspired Writings, and consequently of the Truth of the Revelation itself.

The Churches in *following* Ages, long after the Apostles Times, instituted the Forty-days Fast of *Lent*, for some *sort* of a Resemblance or Imitation of our Saviour's Fast: But This, being not of Apostolical Institution, is to be looked upon only as all Other Appointments of meerly humane Authority.

3. It may be inquired *why* our Saviour, who had Power over unclean Spirits, and could cast out Devils at his Pleasure; was yet pleased to submit himself and and condescend so far, as to be *Tempted* at all by the Enemy. To this Question, the Apostle gives an Answer, *Heb.* ii. 14; that our Lord being through Death *to destroy him that had the Power of Death, that is, the Devil*;—— *took* therefore *upon him, not the Nature of Angels*, wherein he could not have died; *but* the Nature of *Men*. *Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the Sins of the people. For in that He himself hath suffered, being* Tempted; *he is able to succour Them that are Tempted.* And ch. iv. 15; *We have not an High-priest, which cannot be touched with the Feeling of our Infirmities; but one who was in all points* Tempted *like as we are, yet without Sin.* Tempted, not only by the *Great Adversary*, as in the present History, whereof my Text is a part; but Tempted also by all the *usual Difficulties of humane Life.* For so he expresses himself to his Disciples, *Luk.* xxii. 28; *Ye are they which have continued with me in my* Temptations. And indeed the Design of his coming into the World, was not barely to *Die*; but in the whole Course of his *Life* also, to set an Example of Humility and of perfect Obedience, as well as to give himself a Propitiation for our Sins by his *Death.* For *This* reason he was *circumcised*, and became obedient in all things to the Law of *Moses.* And when he came to *John*'s Baptism; though he had No Sin to wash away by Repentance; and *John*, knowing him, would have forbidden him, saying, *I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to Me?* Matt. iii. 14; yet *Jesus* insisted upon it, saying, *Suffer it to be so Now; For thus it becometh us to fulfil All Righteousness.* All *Righteousness*; that is, every thing which is, not only properly and strictly *needful in itself*; but every thing that is *meet*, every thing that is *decent*, every thing that is *regular*, *exemplary*, or *of good report.*

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4. It may be inquired, (and This is one of the greateſt Difficulties of all,) *why* the Tempter *would* at all aſſault our Lord, or what Advantage he could poſſibly hope to gain over him. Was it poſſible that he could think to defeat the Counſel of God, or diſappoint the Deſign of his ſending the Meſſiah into the World? To this, it may be replied, 1*ſt*, That as wicked *men* perpetually attempt *vain*, *unreaſonable*, and *abſurd* things; ſo wicked *Spirits* likewiſe deſerted of God, and forſaken of all Goodneſs and True Underſtanding, may well be ſuppoſed to attempt things no leſs *unreaſonable* and *abſurd*. That Evil Spirits ſhould *at any Time* have *hoped* to prevail againſt the Almighty by *Power and Force*, as Some have ſuppoſed; is indeed too abſurd to be imagined. But that they ſhould rebel againſt the *Counſel and Will* of God, and endeavour maliciouſly to overthrow *his Kingdom of Righteouſneſs*; this is no more than what wicked *men*, in a lower degree, are perpetually doing. But 2*dly*, It may be conſidered further, that poſſibly the Tempter was not yet *ſure*, whether our Lord was indeed the *Meſſiah* or no. His words, If *thou* be *the Son of God*, ſeem to expreſs his *uncertainty* concerning that matter. And there are ſeveral other things taken notice of in Scripture, the obſerving of which will make This ſeem leſs improbable. The Evangeliſts tell us, that the Devil *entred into Judas*, and put it in his Heart to betray his Maſter. By This it appears, that the Tempter did not even Then know, that the Salvation of Men was to be accompliſhed by the ſhedding of the Blood of Chriſt; ſeeing he hoped to put an End to the Doctrine of Chriſt, by deſtroying his Life. And This will be the leſs to be wondred at, if we conſider what is declared in Scripture even concerning good *Angels themſelves*, who *always behold the Face of our Father which is in Heaven*. 1 Pet. i. 11; The Antient *Prophets*, ſays the Apoſtle, *ſearched What, and what manner of Time, the Spirit of Chriſt which was in them did ſignify, when it teſtified beforehand the Sufferings of Chriſt, and the Glory that ſhould follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themſelves, but unto Us they did miniſter the things which are now reported unto you by Them that have preached the Goſpel unto you, with the Holy Ghoſt ſent down from Heaven. Which things, the* Angels *deſire to look into*. Not only Evil *Spirits* underſtood not, what the Prophets had foretold concerning the Sufferings of Chriſt, and the Glory that ſhould follow; but even *Good Angels* themſelves, St. *Peter* tells us, were *deſirous to look into* Thoſe things. And St. *Paul* carries this matter ſtill further: *Eph.* iii. 9; *To preach*, ſaith he, *the unſearchable Riches of Chriſt*; *and to make all men ſee what is the Fellowſhip of the Myſtery, which from the Beginning of the World, hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jeſus Chriſt*; *To the intent that Now unto the Principalities and Powers in* heavenly *places, might be known by the Church the manifold Wiſdom of God. By the Church*; that is, by the Diſpenſations of God's *Providence towards his univerſal Church*, by the *Events* accompliſhing antient *Types and Myſteries*; and by the *clear fulfilling* of obſcure *Prophecies*; by Theſe is the Wiſdom of God, and the manifold Beauty of the Divine Counſels, made known not to *men* only, but to *Angels* alſo. And This perhaps is the true Meaning of That obſcure Text: 1 *Tim.* iii. 16. The *Myſtery* * *of Godlineſs*, (or God) * *manifeſt in the Fleſh*, was ſeen of *Angels*: Seen not in the *literal* Senſe; for That was no Myſtery; But *underſtood, apprehended, and made plain*, to the Angels; who were before, in That ſenſe, *deſirous to look into* it. To mention but One place more: There is a very remarkable Expreſſion in the Book of *Tobit*, ch. vi. 17; where the Angel *Raphael*, one of the ſeven Spirits that are deſcribed as going in and out before the Throne of God, is introduced thus ſpeaking; *Moreover*, I ſuppoſe, ſays he, (he does not ſpeak as with *certain knowledge*, but, I *ſuppoſe*, ſays he,) *that ſhe ſhall bear thee children*. He who conſiders Theſe, and the like Expreſſions of Scripture; will not perhaps think *Evil* Spirits to be Creatures of ſuch extenſive Capacity, but that the Tempter might very well be *uncertain* whether our Saviour was the promiſed *Meſſiah* or no, at the Time of his preſuming to tempt him as in the Text. But 3*dly*, Suppoſing the Tempter *did* know our Lord to be the promiſed *Meſ-*

This is the old, and true Reading.

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siah, at the Time of his tempting him; yet ſtill it was by no means impoſſible for the great Deceiver to ſuppoſe, that as, by ſeducing the *Firſt Adam*, he had excluded Mankind out of That Paradiſe which God had planted for them; ſo by endeavouring to make *ſome* Impreſſion or other upon the *ſecond Adam*, he might prevent Men from being reſtored to Paradiſe again; and ſo a *ſecond Time* defeat *the Counſel of God*. Defeat the *Counſel of God*; That is, *not* prevent any thing that the Almighty had *reſolved abſolutely* to accompliſh: For, in That ſenſe, nothing can *reſiſt* his *Will*, nothing can *oppoſe* his *Power*: But the Enemy *may* oppoſe *ſuch* Counſels or Deſigns of God for the Salvation of Mankind, as are *conditional* only, and appointed to depend upon the Behaviour of *Others*: *Such* Counſels of God, as even *men* are at liberty by their Perverſeneſs and Obſtinacy to diſappoint. As when the Evangeliſt tells us, St. *Luke* i. 30; *that the Phariſees and Lawers* rejected *the Counſel of God againſt themſelves*: That is; *Againſt* their own Intereſt, *againſt* their own both Temporal and Eternal Welfare, they *rejected* the gracious Offers of the Divine Mercy. *Such* Counſels of God as theſe, it is no wonder that He whoſe Works and Kingdom our Lord came to deſtroy, ſhould endeavour to oppoſe. Nor is it at all impoſſible, that the Deſign of God in ſending the *Meſſiah* into the World, might ſeem to the Tempter to be of the *ſame* Nature; to be *conditional* likewiſe. For as *all the* Threatnings of God, even thoſe which in the *manner of* Expreſſion are moſt *peremptory and abſolute*, yet in reality muſt always be underſtood to be *conditional*, and to include a tacit *exception* upon the caſe of Repentance and Reformation; (as is evident in the Inſtance of *Jonah*'s Prophecy againſt *Nineveh*; and as is declared in general by the Prophet *Jeremy*, ch. xviii. 7. *At what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a Nation and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up; and to pull down, and to deſtroy it; If That Nation againſt whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them*:) As (I ſay all the *Threatnings* of God are thus undoubtedly conditional, ſo likewiſe all the *Promiſes* of God to Mankind, *however peremptory and abſolute* they may ſeem in the prophetical Expreſſions of Scripture, may yet poſſibly be ſuppoſed to be in reality *conditional* alſo. The Nation of the *Jews* at This day, notwithſtanding the moſt *expreſs* and determinate *Predictions* in the Old Teſtament, not only concerning the Coming *of the Meſſiah*, but even concerning the *preciſe* Time *and* Manner *of his Coming*, in Terms the moſt *poſitive and abſolute* that can be; yet are univerſally of Opinion, that for the Sins of That people, his Coming has been put off beyond the Time limited by the Prophets above ſeventeen hundred Years. Well therefore might the Tempter apprehend, by the ſame manner of Reaſoning, even *after* the Meſſiah had begun to appear in the Fleſh, that notwithſtanding the plain Predictions concerning the Salvation of Mankind by him, yet poſſibly even in all *Thoſe* Promiſes there might be included ſuch *tacit Conditions*, as that either by Tempting Chriſt himſelf, or his Followers the Apoſtles, or by exciting wicked Men to oppoſe and withſtand Him and his Doctrine, he might at leaſt in *ſome meaſure* prevent the Effect of his Coming, and hinder (at leaſt *in great part*) the Salvation of Men.

Thus have I briefly endeavoured to give ſome Anſwer to that difficult Enquiry, *why* the Tempter would at all aſſault our Lord; what Advantage he could poſſibly hope to gain over him; and how, and in what degree, he could think it poſſible to defeat the Counſel of God, and to diſappoint the Deſign of his ſending the Meſſiah into the World.

5thly, and *Laſtly*; ſince we read no more in the Goſpels, of Chriſt's being Tempted after This; it may be enquired, in the Laſt place, *how* and in *what Senſe* it is ſaid by St. *Luke*, at the Concluſion of this Hiſtory of our Lord's Temptation, *ch.* iv. 13; that the Tempter *departed from him, only* for a Seaſon. The words, *for a* Seaſon, ſeem to imply, as if after ſome Interval he *returned to tempt him again*. Which ſince we no where read that he attempted any more, in any *ſuch* Way of Temptation as is recorded in the Text; it is therefore probable that the Evangeliſt's Meaning was This; that the Tempter having failed

of

of Succeſs in his *preſent* Method, departed from our Lord for a Time, intending *hereafter* to aſſault him after *Another* manner. That is to ſay: Finding there was *no poſſibility* of making any impreſſion upon him by *Fraud*, he reſolved for the future to *withſtand* his Doctrine by *Oppoſition and Force*: And becauſe there was *no room* for his Suggeſtions to take *any* place, upon *Chriſt himſelf*; the only remaining Way, was to ſtir up againſt him the Hatred of profane *Men*; and try, by making *Others* his Inſtruments, to put a Stop by their Malice to that Doctrine, which *He himſelf* by his *own* Temptations could not prevent from being preached. *After a Seaſon* therefore, according to the intimation St *Luke* gives us, he returned again: And having prevailed upon *Judas* to betray him, and upon the *Phariſees* to encourage the Baſeneſs of the Betrayer, and upon *Pilate* to put him to Death upon their falſe Accuſation; he might very well think, that by the Succeſs of this *laſt* Attempt, he had made ſufficient Amends for his Failure in the *firſt*. By which Means, not only wicked *Men*, by whoſe hands our Lord was *crucified and ſlain*; but even the *Great Deceiver Himſelf*, became an Inſtrument in the hand of Providence, to bring about, *according to the determinate Counſel and Foreknowledge of God*, the Salvation of the World. *O the depth of the Riches both of the Wiſdom and Knowledge of God! how unſearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways paſt finding out!* The Particulars of this laſt and great Tranſaction, are thus recorded in the Goſpel: Our Saviour, in his laſt Diſcourſe with his Diſciples, a little before his Paſſion, gives them Notice of their great Temptation approaching; *Joh.* xiv. 30. *The Prince of this World*, ſaith he, *cometh, and hath nothing in me.* The *firſt* Effect of this his coming, is expreſſed, *Joh.* xiii. 2; *The Devil having now put it into the Heart of Judas Iſcariot, Simon's Son, to betray him*: And *Luke* xxii. 3; *Then* entred Satan *into Judas ſirnamed Iſcariot, being of the Number of the twelve.* This *ſucceſs* of the Tempter, was upon *Judas* only: But *Attempts* were made, upon the *reſt* of the Diſciples likewiſe: *Luke* xxii. 31; *The Lord ſaid, Simon, Simon; behold*, Satan *has deſired to have you, that he may ſift you as wheat; But I have prayed for thee, that thy Faith fail not:* And unto *all* the Diſciples, ver. 40; *Pray*, ſaith he, *that ye enter not into Temptation:* and again ver. 46; *Riſe, and pray, leſt ye enter into Temptation.* Now at the ſame Time that *one* of his Diſciples was thus moved to *betray him*, and the *reſt* afraid to acknowledge him, and tempted to *deny* him; the *Malice and Cruelty* of his Enemies, his Enemies both *viſible* and *inviſible*, wicked *Men* and wicked *Spirits*, were ſtirred up againſt him to ſuch a degree, that he Thus ſpeaks concerning *Himſelf*, *Joh.* xii. 27; *Now is my Soul troubled, and what ſhall I ſay? Father, ſave me from this Hour* and concerning *his* Enemies, *Luke* xxii. 53; *This is your Hour, and the Power of Darkneſs.* The *Effect* was, that he was delivered into the Hands of wicked Men, to be crucified and ſlain. And when the *Enemy of Man's Salvation*, and the *Enemies of their* own *Salvation*, thought they had thus entirely put an End to the Doctrine of Chriſt by his Death; the *Wiſdom of God*, on the contrary, brought it to paſs, (which was the Myſtery hid from the Foundation of the World,) that by *this very means*, even *through Death, he deſtroyed Him that had the Power of Death, that is, the Devil*: According to that Prediction of his own, ſpoken juſt *before* his Paſſion, but not underſtood till *after* his Reſurrection, *Joh.* xii. 31. *Now is the Judgment of this World, now ſhall the Prince of this World, be caſt out:* And ch. xvi. 11; *Of Judgment, becauſe the Prince of this World is judged.*

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Acts ii. 23.

Rom. xi. 33.

Heb. ii. 14.

The only Obſervation I ſhall add further upon This Head is, that whereas it is affirmed in This Hiſtory, that Satan *entred into Judas*, and *put it in his Heart to betray his Maſter*; it is not to be underſtood, either in *Judas*'s, or in any *other* Wicked man's caſe, that the *Devil's tempting them* is any manner of Excuſe or Extenuation of their Sin. For the Devil can *but* ſuggeſt, even as wicked *men* do one to another. And, *being Tempted*, or having Evil *ſuggeſted* to them, is no *Sin*. *Sin*, conſiſts wholly in the *Conſent of the Will*, approving and putting in practice the Evil ſuggeſted. Over which *Conſent of the Will*, the

SERM. VIII. *Devil* has no Power; but it is owing entirely to the *Wickedneſs of the Man's* own *Heart*, *chuſing* to do the Evil which it ought to have *refuſed*. And therefore the Queſtion is put by St. *Peter* to *Ananias*, (Acts v. 3; by way of *aggravation* and ſevere *Reproof* of his Crime; why *hath Satan filled thine Heart?* that is, what *Excuſe can you have, for complying with ſo* vile *a Temptation of the Devil, which you* ought *to have rejected with all Abhorrence?*

But concerning This, (which is a practical Inference from the whole,) I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak further, in the following Diſcourſe.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

Of our SAVIOUR'S Temptation.

[*A Sermon preached in Lent.*]

MATT. iv. 1.

Then was Jeſus led up of the Spirit into the Wilderneſs, to be tempted of the Devil.

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IN diſcourſing upon the Account the Scripture gives us of our Saviour's Temptation, I propoſed *1ſt* to conſider the ſeveral *Difficulties*, which, in that portion of the Goſpel-Hiſtory, may ſeem to want more particular Explication: and *2dly*, to deduce from thence ſuch *Obſervations*, as may be uſeful to direct us in our *own* Practice.

I. In the *Firſt* place, the *Difficulties*, which, in the Hiſtory of our Saviour's Temptation, ſeemed moſt neceſſary to be explained, I have already conſidered particularly in a foregoing Diſcourſe; And have ſhown diſtinctly, *1ſt*, *why* our Saviour, whom the Scripture elſewhere declares to have been *tempted in* all *points like as We are*, only *without Sin*; is yet by the Evangeliſts recorded, as having been tempted *only at this particular Time*. *2dly*, *why* our Saviour continued ſo long in the ſolitary Retirement of a *Deſert place*, and why he *Faſted* through all that Space of Forty days. *3dly*, *why* our Lord, who had Power over unclean Spirits, and could caſt out Devils at his Pleaſure; was yet pleaſed to ſubmit himſelf and condeſcend ſo far, as to be *Tempted* by the Enemy. *4thly*, *why* the Tempter *would* at all aſſault our Lord, or what Advantage he could poſſibly hope to gain over him. *5thly* and *Laſtly*, *how* and *in what Senſe*, ſince we read no more in the Goſpels, of Chriſt's being Tempted after This; it is

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yet ſaid by St. *Luke*, at the Concluſion of this Hiſtory of our Lord's Temptation, that the Tempter *departed from him*, only *for a* Seaſon.

Theſe ſeveral Queſtions, naturally ariſing in the mind of any one who carefully reads this Portion of the Goſpel-Hiſtory; I have endeavoured to give particular and diſtinct Anſwers to them, in the foregoing Diſcourſe. I am now in the

II. *Second* place, to deduce from this Hiſtory of our Lord's Temptation, ſuch *Inferences* or *Obſervations*, as may be uſeful to direct us in our *own* Practice. And

1*ſt*, We have from hence an Intimation given us, that the Devil is always ready to Tempt men to Sin. As the Good *Spirit* of God, is always willing to aſſiſt thoſe who ſincerely deſire to be religious; and the *Angels* are with cheerfulneſs ſent forth to Miniſter, to thoſe who ſhall be Heirs of Salvation: ſo the Scripture every where repreſents the Evil *One*, as delighting and watching to entice men into Sin: (1 *Pet.* v. 8.) Be ſober, *be vigilant*; *becauſe your adverſary the Devil, as a roaring Lion, walketh about, ſeeking whom he may devour.* Again *Eph.* vi. 11, 12; *Put on the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to ſtand againſt the Wiles of the Devil. For we wreſtle not againſt fleſh and blood, but againſt Principalities, againſt Powers, againſt the Rulers of the Darkneſs of This World, againſt ſpiritual Wickedneſs in high Places.* And ch. ii. 2; *According to the Courſe of this World, according to the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Spirit that Now worketh in the children of Diſobedience.* If it be here inquired, for what *Reaſon* wicked Spirits tempt Men to Sin, and what *End* they can propoſe in ſo doing; the moſt probable Anſwer is, that they do it for the very *ſame* reaſons, as wicked *Men* tempt and ſeduce one another. Partly, as eſteeming it a ſort of *Apology* or *Excuſe* for *Themſelves*, if they can draw *Others* into the like Condemnation; and partly as being moved with *Envy*, that Others ſhould enjoy That Happineſs which they themſelves have loſt; and *hating* thoſe, whoſe manners and diſpoſitions are contrary to their own. Concerning wicked *Men*, the Author of the Book of *Wiſdom* Thus deſcribes the Temper I am ſpeaking of; *ch.* ii. 12; *Let us lie in wait for the Righteous; becauſe he is not for our Turn, and he is clean contrary to our Doings; —— He is grievous unto us, even to behold; for his Life is not like other Mens, his ways are of another Faſhion.* And concerning evil *Spirits*, ver. 24; *Through* Envy *of the Devil, came Death into the World; and they that hold of his ſide, do find it.* Nevertheleſs; though the Scriptures do indeed thus teach us, that the Devil is always ready to *Tempt* Men to Sin, yet it is Always carefully to be obſerved, that he *can* do *nothing more* but *Tempt us.* He has *no Power* over our *Perſons*, or our *Wills.* He can *only* ſet before us *Baits* and *Allurements*; but we *cannot* be hurt by them, except we *yield* to them and *chuſe* them. The *Treachery* and *Corruptneſs* of our *own Hearts within*, is *much more dangerous*, than all the Aſſaults of the *Enemy* from *without. Let no Man ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God*, St. Jam. i. 13; that is, let no Man plead as an *Excuſe* for his Sin, that *God* permitted the *Devil* to *tempt* him into it. (For that This is the meaning of the Phraſe, *tempted of God*; appears plainly from 2 *Sam.* xxiv. 1; compared with 1 *Chron.* xxi. 1; In *one* of which places, it is ſaid, *the* Lord *moved David to number Iſrael and Judah*; and in the *other*, that Satan *provoked David to number Iſrael.*) Let no Man (ſays the Apoſtle) plead as an *Excuſe* for his Sin, that *God* permitted the Evil One to *tempt* him into it. For *God* as he *cannot* himſelf *be tempted with evil*, ſo *neither tempteth he any Man*; neither doth he permit the *Devil* to tempt any one further, than by laying before him ſuch Allurements, as it is *in the perſon's* Power, and it is his *Duty*, and it is the *proper Trial and Exerciſe of his Virtue*, to reſiſt. *But every man is* then, and then only, *tempted*; then only, effectually and ſinfully, *tempted*; *when he is drawn away of his* own *Luſt, and enticed.* The *Enemy* of Men's Salvation can do nothing more, but only entice the *Covetous* with Hopes of *Gain*, puff up the *Ambitious* with Expectation of *Honour*, allure the *Voluptuous* with Proſpects of *Pleaſure.* Where the Mind is not under the Power of any of theſe corrupt Affections,

Affections, the Tempter finding *nothing in it*, (as the Scripture-expreſſion is, *Joh.* xiv. 30;) his Temptations can take no hold, and his Power is at an End. *Reſiſt the Devil*, ſays the Apoſtle, *and he will flee from you.* Take heed only that your own *Heart* be ſincere, ſincere in the Purſuit of Truth and Virtue; and all the *fiery darts of the wicked One* will in courſe be quenched. If we do not, by our own Perverſeneſs, *grieve* and drive from us *the good Spirit of God*; *greater is He that is in Us, than He that is in the World.* *God*, ſaith the Son of *Sirach*, *has ſet before Man Life and Death*; *and whether him liketh, ſhall be given him.* The good *Spirit* is *equally willing, and more able* to help us, than the Evil *one* can be to hurt us. In vain therefore do wicked Men hope to extenuate their own Crimes, by alledging that they were tempted by the Devil. For the Scripture never mentions it as an *Excuſe*, but on the contrary as an *Aggravation* of a Fault, when 'tis of *ſuch* a nature as may well be ſuppoſed to have been ſuggeſted by the *Evil One*, and for *That reaſon* ought above all things to have been carefully avoided. Why *has Satan filled thine Heart?* ſaid St. *Peter* to *Ananias*; Acts v. 3. by way of more *ſevere* Reproof, for his preſumption in attempting to deceive the Holy Spirit, wherewith God had inſpired the Apoſtles. Nor indeed is it at all impoſſible, but that Men's wicked deeds may ſometimes rightly be aſcribed to the Devil, even when perhaps they proceed *only* from the Corruption of their *own* Hearts, and not from any immediate ſuggeſtion of *evil Spirits*. For, as it is agreeable to the Style of Scripture, and to the Reaſon of Things, to aſcribe every thing that is *Good* to *God*; becauſe *he* is the original *Author* of the *Powers* by which all Good is done; and whatever Good is done, is in obedience to His *Commands*, and agreeable to his *Nature and Will*: So every *Wicked* thing that is done, may in a proportionate ſenſe be aſcribed to the *Devil*; becauſe He is the *Head*, and the *Beginner* and *Encourager* of Evil; and whatever Evil is done, is in *imitation of* him, and *agreeable to* him.

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Eccluſ. xv 17.

1 Theſſ. iii. 3. 2 Tim. iii. 12.

2*dly*, The 2*d* Obſervation I would draw from the Hiſtory of our Lord's Temptation, is, that we are hereby taught, that no Perſon whatſoever is ſo *Great* or *Good*, as to be exempt from Temptation. If the *Captain of our Salvation* was himſelf *made perfect by Suffering*, let no Man think himſelf ſo Good, as not to deſerve Chaſtiſement at the hand of God. If *Chriſt himſelf* was *in all points tempted like as We are*, let no man think himſelf ſo perfect, as to be above the Danger and the Fear of Temptation. We have great reaſon, as the Apoſtle admoniſhes; *Heb.* ii. 1; *to give earneſt heed to the things that we have heard, leſt at any time we ſhould let them ſlip.* For the *Deceitfulneſs of Sin* is Great, and the *Tempter* is always *watchful* to ſeduce us, and the *Heart* of man is apt to grow *negligent*. So that even the *Beſt* Chriſtians are by St. *Paul* admoniſhed, to *work out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling*. *Let him that thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall*; 1 Cor. x. 12; and *Rom.* xi. 20; *Thou ſtandeſt by Faith*; *be not high-minded, but fear.*

3*dly*, From the conſideration of the *Time* of our Saviour's being tempted, which was *immediately after his Baptiſm*; we are inſtructed, that when Men *firſt* ſet about the Practice of Religion, they are *then* reaſonably to expect the greateſt Difficulties in their Duty. *Eccluſ.* ii. 1; *My Son, if thou come to ſerve the Lord, prepare thy Soul for Temptation.* The Life of a Chriſtian, is in Scripture compared to a State of *Warfare*; wherein he that goeth out to Battle, ought well to conſider, before his ſetting out, what is the Strength of the Enemy that cometh againſt him. Whoever will lead a religious life; muſt begin with expecting, to find difficulty in ſubduing *his own* vitious Paſſions, and to find Oppoſition from the *courſe* of a corrupt and debauched *World*. *No Man*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *ſhould be moved by theſe Afflictions*; *for, yourſelves know that we are* appointed *thereunto*: *Yea, and* All *that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus*, ſhall *ſuffer Perſecution.* For This reaſon, the Scripture frequently uſes the Phraſe of *Overcoming*, to expreſs a Chriſtian's Perſeverance in the Love of Truth and Virtue. He muſt be *Tempted* with *Allurements*, and *terrified* with *Dangers*; and then, if he *Overcometh*, ſaith our Saviour, he *ſhall inherit all things.* The ſooner

SERM. IX. a Man *begins* the Practice of true Religion, the *fewer* evil Habits and the *less strong* vicious Inclinations will he have to ſtruggle with from *within*. And when he has once got above the *Allurements of inward Temptation*, he will with much greater Advantage be able to withſtand the *Force* of *Perſecution from abroad*. When our Saviour had intirely repulſed the firſt Aſſaults of ſenſual Pleaſure and Ambition; the Tempter, ſays the Text, *departed from him, and Angels came and miniſtred unto him*. Thus, whoſoever in the practice of religion, ſteddily reſiſts the *firſt* Temptations to Vice, and ſuffers not himſelf to be corrupted with any Evil Habits; ſhall, after That, more eaſily *keep himſelf, and That wicked One toucheth him not*. *Wiſdom*, that is, Virtue, *is glorious*, ſaith the Author of the Book of *Wiſdom*; ch. vi. 12; *and never fadeth away*; —— *Whoſo ſeeketh her early, ſhall have no great Trouble, for he ſhall find her ſitting at his Doors*.

Mat. iv. 1. Luke iv. 1. 4*thly*, From the following Expreſſion in the Text, that *Jeſus* being *led by the Spirit*, or being *full of the Holy Ghoſt*, went up into the Wilderneſs to be Tempted of the Devil; we may learn, that *Temptation to Sin* is not at all an *Argument of God's Diſpleaſure*, but only a Trial *of us appointed by his wiſe Providence*. 'Tis, in the Nature of things, a *neceſſary* and *eſſential* condition of a *Probation-ſtate*, that there ſhould be ſome Trial of mens Virtue. And, in *This* ſenſe, the Scripture ſcruples not to affirm, that *God himſelf* tempts Men. *Gen.* xxii. 1; *After theſe things God did* tempt, that is, did try *Abraham*. And, *Deut.* viii. 2; *God led thee theſe forty years in the wilderneſs, to prove thee, to* know *what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldſt keep his Commandments or no*; and ſuffered falſe Prophets, ch. xiii. 3; that he might know *whether you love the Lord your God with all your Heart, and with all your Soul*. The meaning is; not, that in Theſe caſes God does not *know before*, how men will behave themſelves; but that They who *have in them* a true *Root* of Virtue, may *actually* bring forth the *Fruit* of it; may be *exerciſed*, may be *approved*, may be *made manifeſt*, to the *World* here, and to Men *and* Angels hereafter; and may be, *in* themſelves, *improved, eſtabliſhed*, and *fitted* for the State of Heaven. *The Trial of our Faith*, (ſaith Jam. i. 3. the Apoſtle,) *worketh Patience, and Patience Experience, and Experience Hope*. For Rom. v. 4. *This* reaſon, we are exhorted, *not to faint*, nor to be *caſt down* under Temptations; nor to *think it* ſtrange *concerning the fiery Trials that are to try us*. Nay, on 1 Pet. i. v. the contrary, we are encouraged even to *rejoice* under *manifold temptations*; to call *the Man* Bleſſed, *that endureth temptation*, (Jam. i. 12;) to glory *in tribulations*; (Rom. v. 3;) to *count it all* joy, *when we fall into divers temptations*, (Jam. i. 2: Conſidering, that *when we are tried, we ſhall receive the Crown of Life*, (ver. 12; and that *the Tryal of our Faith, is much more pretious than of Gold that periſheth*, (1 Pet. i. 7:) For, *when he has tried us*, (as Holy *Job* expreſſes it,) *we ſhall come forth as Gold*; ch. xxiii. 10; And the Author of the Book of *Wiſdom*, ch. iii. 5; God, ſaith he, proved *the Souls of the righteous, and found them worthy for himſelf*; *As Gold in the furnace hath he tried them, and received them as a burnt-offering*: *And in the Time of their viſitation* (that is, at the Day of Judgment;) *they ſhall ſhine, and run to and fro like Sparks among the Stubble*; *They ſhall judge the Nations, and have Dominion over the people, and their Lord ſhall reign for ever*.

Nevertheleſs, 'tis here carefully to be obſerved, that all the things which the Scripture ſpeaks in *This manner* concerning Temptations and our rejoicing under them, are to be underſtood *only* of Temptations either *already paſt and overcome*; or elſe of ſuch, as we have *very good ground of aſſurance*, that, by the grace of God, they ſhall be *overcome*. For otherwiſe, as to *Temptations in general*, Temptations *unexperienced*, and of which we *know* the *Danger* but *not the Succeſs*; concerning *Theſe*, the Direction the Scripture gives us, is, on the contrary, that we may *lawfully*, nay, that 'tis *our* Duty to pray *againſt them*; and endeavour to *avoid* them. Our Saviour, who *knew what was in Man*, thus exhorts his Diſciples, *Mar.* xiv. 38; *Watch and pray, leſt ye enter into Temptation*: and *himſelf* prays, not for his *own* Sake, but as an *Example to Us*; *Father, if it be poſſible, let this Cup paſs from me*. Our *Nature* is *Frail*,

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our *Paſſions ſtrong*, our *Wills biaſſed*; and our ſecurity, generally ſpeaking, conſiſts much more certainly in *eſcaping* great Temptations, than in *conquering* them. For This Reaſon, our Lord directed his Followers, when they were *Perſecuted in One City, to flee unto another.* Which they who refuſed to do, led *themſelves* into Temptation, and tempted *God*: Putting themſelves upon an Expectation of an extraordinary Aſſiſtance, where God had not given any Promiſe of affording it. For where God *calls* us to a Trial, he *will* enable us to go thro' it; but there is *no Aſſurance* of ſuch Aſſiſtance to the Preſumptuous. 'Tis not lawful therefore, for Men to *go* of themſelves, and *throw themſelves* into Temptation; and we are taught to *pray* moreover, that God alſo, in his good Providence, would *not lead us into it.* This Phraſe, of God's leading *men into Temptation*, it is evident, muſt be underſtood according to the *Analogy* of Scripture-language: which, becauſe Nothing can come to paſs without God's permiſſion, does therefore uſually, in acknowledgment of the Supreme ſuperintendency of Divine Providence over all Events, aſcribe *every thing* figuratively to God. As when *God* is ſaid to have *delivered* a Man, who is ſlain by Chance, into the Hand of his Neighbour; to have *moved* David, by means of Satan's Temptations, to number *Iſrael* and *Judah*; to have *hardened Pharaoh*'s heart; to have *blinded the Eyes*, and *made fat*, or *ſtupid*, the Heart of the People; to have *ſent forth* a lying Spirit among *Ahab*'s Prophets; to have *hardened the Spirit of Sihon* King of *Heſhbon*, and *made his Heart obſtinate*; to have *hardened the Nations*, to *come againſt Iſrael to battel*, that *he might deſtroy them utterly*; to have *put* it in the Hearts of Evil Princes, to give their Kingdom unto the Beaſt or Falſe Prophet; to *ſend* upon Men a *ſtrong Deluſion*; and, in the Phraſe we are now ſpeaking of, to lead *men into Temptation.* 'Tis plain, in *all* theſe Expreſſions, the Intention is not to affirm, (except perhaps in ſome *judicial* Caſes,) that God, *actually* and *efficiently*, does theſe Things; but only, that in the Courſe of his All-wiſe Providence, he juſtly *permits* them to come to paſs. Wherefore, when our Saviour teaches us to pray, that God would not lead *us into Temptation*; the meaning is, that he would be pleaſed ſo to order and direct Things by his All-wiſe Providence in This Probation-ſtate, as not to *ſuffer us to be tempted above what we are able*, but that he would *with the Temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that we may be able to bear it.* And particularly, that he would not *judicially*, and *in anger*, give us up and leave us to the Power of Temptation, and to the Seducements of the evil One; as he did *Pharaoh* and *Ahab*, and *Judas*, and the *Iſraelites in the Wilderneſs*, when (as the Pſalmiſt expreſſes it) *he gave them up unto their own Hearts Luſts, and let them follow their own Imaginations.* But that, on the contrary, he would either, by his *preventing Mercy*, keep *us* from *the Hour of Temptation*; Rev. iii. 10; or, by his gracious Support, *deliver us* out *of it*; 2 Pet. ii. 9.

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5thly; From what St *Luke* records, at the Concluſion of this Hiſtory of our Lord's Temptation, that the Tempter departed from him *only for a Seaſon*; we may obſerve, that though at the firſt Entrance into the Courſe of a religious Life, the greateſt Difficulties and Temptations are generally to be expected; and when Once thoſe are clearly overcome, the *ways* of Virtue uſually become *Pleaſantneſs*, and her *Paths Peace*; yet Men ought *never* to look upon themſelves as *ſecure*, from the Returns of Temptation; but that the Evil One may again aſſault them under different Forms and Shapes, to ſeduce them into different kinds of Sins; grounding Temptations, *perhaps*, even upon their *Security itſelf*. Wherefore, *we ought* (ſays the Apoſtle) *to give the more earneſt heed to the things which we have heard, leſt at any time we ſhould let them ſlip*; Heb. ii. 1. For, Many Wiſe and Good Reſolutions, made with great Sincerity and right Intention, have through Negligence after ſome Time, and want of ſerious recollection failed of their Effect. *Watch ye therefore, and be ready* Always; *for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come: Bleſſed* (ſays our Saviour) *is that Servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, ſhall find ſo doing*; Matt. xxiv. 46.

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Laſtly; From the *Particulars* of our Saviour's Temptation, we may obſerve the *ſeveral principal Ways* by which the Tempter aſſaults Men, and what are the moſt *proper Means of reſiſting* each Temptation.

His *firſt* Temptation, was founded upon *bodily and temporal Wants*: When he *was an hungred*, the Tempter ſaid; *If thou be the Son of God, command that theſe Stones be made Bread.* His meaning was; *If you are the Beloved of God, do not ſubmit to undergo any Hardſhips; but* inſiſt *with God, that he* ſhow *his Love to you, by ſupporting you even miraculouſly. Want*, is the great Temptation to *murmuring* againſt God: And therefore *Satan* is repreſented, *Job* i. 11; as thus pleading with God againſt *Job*; *Put forth thine hand now, and* touch *all that he hath, and he will curſe thee to thy Face.* And the Prayer of *Agur* is for this Reaſon given us as an example; *Prov.* xxx. 8; *Give me not poverty,—leſt I take the Name of my God in vain.* The *proper* Preſervative againſt *This* Temptation, our Saviour teaches us in his Reply; *Man ſhall not live by Bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God.* We muſt at all times depend upon the Protection of Providence; and conſider, that as in the Time of *Plenty*, we are ſupported *not* by the *things themſelves* which we enjoy, but by the *Bleſſing of God*, which alone enables them to ſupport us; ſo, in the Time of *Want*, the ſame Providence, if he thinks fit, and ſees that it will promote our eternal Intereſt, can ſtill always find proper Means of preſerving us.

The *Second* Temptation offered to our Lord, was; *If thou be the Son of God, caſt thy ſelf down*; down from a pinnacle of the Temple; *For it is written, He ſhall give his Angels Charge concerning thee,— leſt at any Time thou daſh thy foot againſt a Stone.* To *This* Temptation, our Lord replies, that there being a Commandment given in the Law, *Thou ſhalt not Tempt the Lord thy God*; 'tis therefore *not Lawful* for any Man to throw himſelf needleſly into danger, merely to try whether Providence will therein protect him or no. We may *rely* upon God, that he will *give his Angels Charge over us*, in all Dangers into which his Providence leads us; but no Man ought to *tempt* God, by running *wilfully* any preſumptuous hazards.

The Uſe therefore of *This* part of the Hiſtory of our Lord's Temptation, may be to warn us againſt *Two* or *Three* very dangerous Seducements of This kind. *One* is a preſumptuous *confidence* or vain *ſecurity*, relying upon groundleſs Notions of *Predeſtination* and of God's *particular Favour* to us; or founded upon a *Falſe Application* of *conditional* Promiſes, as if they were *abſolute*: *Caſt thy ſelf down*, For, *it is written, he ſhall give his Angels Charge concerning thee.*

Another dangerous Temptation which we are *here* likewiſe warned of; a Temptation, *contrary* at firſt Sight to That now-mentioned, and yet in reality leading into the *ſame* Snare; is *Diſtruſt* of God. Such a Diſtruſt, as the *Iſraelites* in the Wilderneſs were guilty of, when they ſaid; *He ſmote the ſtony Rock indeed, that the Waters—— flowed withal; but can he give Bread alſo, or provide Fleſh for his People*; Pſ. lxxviii. 21? He hath preſerved thee indeed in *Other* Dangers; but *Caſt thy ſelf down from Hence*, and, if he has a Favour to thee, will he preſerve thee *Then*? When God has given Men *ſufficient* Evidence of any Truth; to be ſtill diſſatisfied, and continually requiring *Other* Signs, is *Tempting of God.* Thus the *Jews in the Wilderneſs*, tho' they *ſaw* God's *works* with their own Eyes, yet continued to *tempt* him *ten times*; Num. xiv. 22. Thus the Phariſees, after the *Voice from Heaven*, at our Saviour's Baptiſm, and after many other miraculous Works, yet ſtill deſired of him a *Sign from Heaven*, Matt. xvi. 1. Thus, after the Proof given to St. *Peter*, of God's receiving the *Gentiles* into the Goſpel-covenant; he calls it *tempting of God*, Acts xv. 10; to endeavour to *put upon the necks of the Diſciples the Yoke of* the Ceremonial Law. Thus, after the Proofs God has given of his *exiſtence*, by the works of Nature; and of his *Will*, by the Revelation of the Goſpel; to call for *more* proofs, is a *tempting* of God.

Pſ. xcv. 9.

The *Third* and *Laſt* Temptation offered to our Lord, was *Worldly Power, Glory*, and *Intereſt: All theſe* Kingdoms *will I give thee*, and the Glory *of them, if thou wilt fall down and worſhip Me.* The Greateſt of all Temptations, is *Riches, Honour and Power.* Theſe are the great Incentives, to *Luxury, Pride, and Tyranny.* The Proſperity *of Fools deſtroys them*, Prov. i. 32: And, *Man being in* Honour, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *has* no *Underſtanding*; that is, is very apt to forget Himſelf, and his Duty. *They that* will *be rich, fall into Temptation and a Snare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful Luſts, which drown men in deſtruction and perdition*, 1 Tim. vi. 9. Inſomuch that our Saviour declares, *Matt.* xix, 23; *that a Rich man ſhall* hardly *enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*: *Hardly*: that is, not that Riches *themſelves* are any Fault, but becauſe of the numerous Temptations they accidentally lead men into, in a vicious and corrupt World.

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Pſ. xlix. 20.

The *Anſwer* our Lord makes the Tempter upon this Laſt Trial; *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and Him Only ſhalt thou ſerve*; teaches us, that we muſt prefer before all things, the Service of God, and the Practice of true Religion: being always ready to reject, whatever ſhall come in competition with our Duty; even the *whole World*, if offered to us at the purchaſe of *Sin*. If we be found of *This* diſpoſition; Lovers of Truth, and Doers of Righteouſneſs; the *Tempter* will *depart from us*, as he did from our Lord; and *Angels* will *come, and miniſter unto us*; and the *Spirit of God* will preſerve and guide us unto eternal Life.

SERMON X.

The Shortneſs and Vanity of Humane Life.

[*Preached in Lent.*]

JOB v. 6, 7.

Although Affliction cometh not forth of the Duſt, neither doth Trouble ſpring out of the Ground; yet Man is born unto Trouble as the Sparks fly upward.

SERM. X.

THERE is no Book in the Old Teſtament, that has in it greater and fuller Acknowledgments, of the Glory and Power of God; nobler and more lively Deſcriptions, of the Works of Creation and Providence; more moving and affectionate Declarations of the Shortneſs and Vanity of Humane Life, and the Tranſitorineſs of all worldly Enjoyments; frequenter and more explicit Expreſſions of all the moral Obligations of Religion, in their higheſt Improvement, in their moſt refined and exalted Senſe; clearer and plainer Significations, of the Hope of the beſt and wiſeſt Men, in antient Ages, concerning a Reſurrection to a future Life; and of their truſt and reliance upon God, even after he had given them over unto Death; than are to be met with, in this eloquent Book of *Job*.

But that which is *more particularly* the Deſign and Subject of the whole Book, is to repreſent to us the Character and Example, of a Man perfect in his generation,

ration, and of unſpotted Integrity, a Man that feared God and eſchewed Evil; whoſe Strength God was pleaſed to try with one of the greateſt Calamities that is ever recorded to have fallen on any of the Sons of Men; Under which, his behaviour was ſuch, that in all that ſevere tryal *he ſinned not, nor charged God fooliſhly*; nor ſuffered his Integrity to depart from him till he died: But he perpetually appealed from the falſe Opinion of *men*, to the unerring Judgment of *God*; and vindicated, in the whole Courſe of his affliction, the Sovereignty and Dominion of God, his Supreme Authority and Right over his Creatures, to *Try them* in what manner he thought fit: Maintaining to the laſt, (*againſt* the Opinion of all his Friends,) that even that great and unparallelled affliction, which God was pleaſed to lay upon him in ſo ſingular and unexampled a manner, was by no means an Evidence of his being wicked and forſaken of God; but an Effect of the Divine Power and Providence which governs the World, and brings about his own Deſigns, by Wiſe, though oft-times (for the preſent) ſecret and inſcrutable Methods: And declaring his reſolution to preſerve his Confidence and Reliance upon God, even beyond the Grave itſelf; Even *though he ſlay me*, ſaith he, *yet will I truſt in him*: For *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that my Eyes ſhall behold him; whom I ſhall ſee for my ſelf, and not another.* SERM. X.

The chapter, out of which the words of my Text are taken, is part of the Reply of *Eliphaz* to that mournful Lamentation of *Job*, wherein he curſes the Day of his Birth, and wiſhes to have had his Affliction prevented by Death. In which Reply of his to *Job*, he erroneouſly ſuppoſes, that, becauſe God frequently puniſhes the Wicked with ſevere Judgments in this World, therefore great Afflictions are a certain Evidence of Men's having been very wicked: *ver.* 3; *I have ſeen the fooliſh taking root, but ſuddenly I curſed his habitation; His children are far from ſafety, and they are cruſhed in the Gate, neither is there any to deliver them; Whoſe harveſt the hungry eateth up, and taketh it even out of the thorns, and the robber ſwalloweth up the ſubſtance.* From which *true* Obſervation, he *wrongfully* intends to conclude, that, becauſe *Job* was afflicted with the *like Misfortunes*, therefore he might juſtly be charged with having been guilty of the *like Impieties*; An Inference very derogatory to the Sovereignty and Wiſdom of Providence, and very unjuſt to the Character of the pious Sufferer. However, upon the whole, he adds this juſt and true *general* Obſervation, the conſideration of which is of perpetual Uſefulneſs, *ver.* 6; *Although affliction cometh not forth of the Duſt, neither doth trouble ſpring out of the Ground; yet Man is born unto trouble, as the ſparks fly upward.*

The words contain, 1*ſt*, A *pathetical deſcription of the Shortneſs and Vanity, the Sorrows and Calamities of humane Life: Man is born unto trouble, as the ſparks fly upward.*

2*dly*, *A Declaration, that theſe Miſeries of humane Life, do not ariſe from Chance, or from Neceſſity, from blind Fate or unaccountable Accidents; but from the wiſe Diſpoſition of the Providence of God, governing the World: Affliction cometh not forth of the Duſt, neither doth trouble ſpring out of the ground.* Wherein,

3dly, It is implied, and intended to be inferred, that *there are many juſt and good, wiſe and uſeful Ends; upon account of which, God permits ſo many Afflictions to fall upon Mankind; and the conſideration therefore of which,* (ſo far as we can diſcover them in this preſent dark and imperfect ſtate,) *ought to teach us Patience, and cheerful Reſignation to the Divine Will.*

1*ſt*, Here is a pathetical deſcription of the Shortneſs and Vanity, the Sorrows and Calamities of humane Life: *Man is born unto trouble, as the Sparks fly upwards.* Afflictions and Calamities of innumerable kinds, ſeem, in the courſe of Things, as neceſſarily and conſtantly to attend the Life of Man; as it is the nature of *light* Things to aſcend upwards, or of things *heavy* to deſcend. And of this, Experience is ſo continual an Evidence, that there needs no arguments of Reaſon to prove it, nor ornaments of Expreſſion to deſcribe it. We

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are *born* into the World, weak and defenceleſs; we *grow up*, ſubject to numberleſs Caſualties; and in the *whole courſe* of our Lives, are perpetually expoſed to Dangers which cannot be foreſeen, and to Troubles which are not poſſible to be prevented. The Weakneſs and Imperfections of *Childhood*, the Vanity and Follies of *Youth*, the Cares and Sollicitudes of *Manhood*, the Uneaſineſs and Infirmities of *Age*; follow each other in a cloſe and ſpeedy Succeſſion. And, in Each of theſe ſtates, we are continually obnoxious to Pains and Diſeaſes of *Body*; and in moſt of them, to the acuter Torment of Anxiety and Vexations of *Mind*. All which Evils are increaſed, by the Accidents and Misfortunes of the World, by our own Negligences and Vices, by the Wickedneſs and unreaſonableneſs of other Men, by the Judgments of God upon our ſelves, and by the conſequences of the Judgments he inflicts for the Unrighteouſneſs of others. All which ſeveral Calamities are emphatically deſcribed by pious Men, in different places of Scripture. With reſpect to our being liable to *Pains* and *Diſeaſes*, Man is *chaſtened*, ſaith *Elihu* in the Book of *Job*, *with pain upon his Bed, and the multitude of his bones with ſtrong pain*; (Job. xxxiii. 19:) and good *Hezekiah* complains; *Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a ſhepherd's tent; I have cut off like a weaver my life; he will cut me off with pining ſickneſs, from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me*: —— *like a crane or a ſwallow, ſo did I chatter; I did mourn as a dove*; Iſaiah xxxviii. 12. With reſpect to the vain *Labours and Anxiety* of life; *Surely every man*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *walketh in a vain ſhadow, and diſquieteth himſelf in vain; he heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who ſhall gather them*; (Pſal. xxxix. 6.) And *Solomon*, who had ſtill greater experience of all the Labours of men under the Sun, thus expreſſes it: (*Eccl.* ii. 23;) *For all his days are ſorrows, and his travel grief; yea, his heart taketh not reſt in the night: This alſo is vanity.* With reſpect to the *Oppreſſions and Troubles*, that good Men ſuffer from the Wickedneſs of *others*; *I conſidered*, ſaith the ſame wiſe Obſerver; (*Eccl.* ix. 2.) *that all things come alike to all, that there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, to the clean and to the unclean, to him that ſacrificeth and to him that ſacrificeth not*, to *the Good* and to *the Sinner*, to him *that ſweareth* and to him *that feareth an Oath*: *Moreover, I ſaw under the Sun the place of judgment, that wickedneſs was there; and the place of righteouſneſs, that iniquity was there*; (iii. 16.) *I beheld the tears of the oppreſſed, and they had no comforter; and on the ſide of their oppreſſors there was power, but they had no comforter*; (iv. 1.) But if there were none of thoſe *external* and *ſuperinduced* calamities which Men bring upon themſelves and others, to augment the neceſſary and unavoidable Troubles which humane Nature is *born to*; yet even by *theſe inherent* ones alone, would the Complaint in the Text ſufficiently be verified; and *Eliphaz* might have juſtified his Obſervation, from the conſideration only, of the mere *natural* Vanity, and Shortneſs of humane Life: Which the Scripture compares to *a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſhes away*; (Jam. iv. 14.) to *a tale that is told*, and then remembred no more; (*Pſ.* xc. 9.) to a *wind that paſſeth away, and cometh not again*; (Pſ. lxxviii. 39.) Admoniſhing us upon all occaſions, that our *days are ſwifter than a weavers ſhuttle, and are ſpent without hope*, (Job vii. 6.) that they *are ſwifter than a poſt; they flee away, and ſee no good; they are paſſed away as the ſwift ſhips, as the eagle that haſteth to the prey*, (ix. 25. 26.) that *Man who is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble; he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth alſo as a ſhadow, and continueth not*; (xiv. 1, 2:) that *as for man, his days are as graſs; as a flower of the field, ſo he flouriſhes; For the wind paſſes over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof ſhall know it no more*; (Pſ. ciii. 15, 16:) that *our days on the earth are as a ſhadow, and there is none abiding*; (1 Chr. xxix. 15:) that *all theſe things paſs away like a ſhadow, and as a poſt that haſteth by; And as a ſhip that paſſeth over the waves of the water, which, when it is gone by, the trace thereof cannot be found, neither the path-way of the keel in the waves; or as when a bird has flown through the air, there is no token of her way to be found*; —— *even ſo we in like manner, as ſoon as we were born, began to draw to our end, and have no ſign of virtue to ſhow*; (*Wiſ.* v. 8.) Upon all which accounts the Patriarch *Jacob*, when

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he was introduced to the King of *Egypt*, complains, notwithstanding he far exceeded the usual measure of mens present Age, and enjoyed much larger Possessions than the generality of Mankind, that yet *few and evil had the days of the years of his pilgrimage been*, (Gen. xlvii. 9.) This Shortness and Vanity of humane Life, is so obvious to every Man's daily Experience and Observation, that it may seem in a manner needless to put Men in mind of That, which it is not possible for them not to know. And yet so it comes to pass, that even the obviousness itself of the Observation, and the evident certainty of it; is the Cause that it has no more effect upon the generality of Men, than if it were very difficult to be observed at all; And for this very Reason, because men are already satisfied that they know it sufficiently, they never attend to it; but live as if they knew it not. It requires no reasoning, no arguing, no meditation, for Men to discover to themselves that they must shortly die; and therefore, putting away the thoughts of it, as too trivial and obvious, they live as if it would never happen. But,

2*dly*, Together with this pathetical description of the Shortness and Vanity, the Sorrows and Calamities of Humane Life, that *Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward*; the Text contains likewise a Declaration, that these Miseries and Troubles do not arise from *Chance* or from *Necessity*, from blind Fate or unaccountable Accidents; but from the wise Disposition of the Providence of *God*, governing the World: *Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.* And this indeed is the *only* true and solid comfort, that can possibly be afforded to a rational and considerate Mind; in order to support him both under the troubles of *Life*, and against the Fears of *Death*. The *Only* possible thing that can effectually enable a man, either to *bear patiently* the Afflictions and Troubles that will necessarily attend him here, or to be *willing and contented to depart from them*, with any hopes of entering into another and better State hereafter; is, to be able to consider that there is a God, a Powerful and Just, a Wise and Good Being, that governs the World. By whose Wisdom and Goodness all things are designed, by whose Providence all things are conducted, to bring about the greatest and best Ends: by whose Power we were created, under whose Care and Government we are preserved and supported; in whose presence we walk perpetually, whose eyes are upon all our Actions, and *in whom we live and move and have our Being*; without whom, not a *sparrow falls to the ground*, or so much as a *Hair of our Head* perishes; without whose direction no Evil can befal us, without whose Permission no Power can hurt us, and who is able finally to make *all things work together for good, to them that love* and fear *Him*. This, and This only, if men would take care to live *virtuously*; (For to a *vitious* man there is No Comfort, neither in This life nor Another,) if men would take care to live *virtuously*, I say, the Thought of God's governing the World is *such* a Consideration, as is sufficient to cause to vanish all the tragical complaints of the Miseries and Vanity of Humane Life. For, though we could not conjecture at any Reason why he has made us thus; though we were not able to discern any kind and gracious designs, in the Afflictions that he lays upon us; though the ways of Providence had been still more inextricable than they are, and his Judgments far more unsearchable than we now apprehend them to be; yet certainly infinite Wisdom and infinite Goodness, might well be trusted and relied upon, by any reasonable and considerate Mind. *That* Power, which in the frame and construction of the *natural* World, has adjusted all things by Weight and Measure: *That* Power, which with exquisite artifice has made every thing in the exactest harmony and proportion, to conspire regularly and uniformly towards accomplishing the best and wisest Ends, in compleating the beautiful Order and Fabrick of the *Material* Universe: *That* Power, might surely in his government of the *moral* World likewise, in his disposing of intelligent and rational creatures, even though *we* could give no *account at all* of his ways, yet with the justest reason be *believed* to direct all things for the best, and in order to bring about the noblest and most excellent Ends. How much more, when, even in

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this ſhort and dark State, our finite and narrow Underſtanding *is* able to diſcern *many* wiſe and uſeful deſigns in the ſevereſt and moſt difficult diſpenſations of his Providence, (as in the ſequel of this diſcourſe ſhall be particularly ſhown;) how much more, I ſay, in *This caſe*, have we reaſon to ſubmit, not only with patience and reſignation, but even with joy and Satisfaction, to his *good pleaſure* in all things; Firmly believing, that, as in the frame of nature, thoſe things which by Atheiſtical Philoſophers were anciently looked upon as arguments of Error and Defect, of want either of Knowledge or Goodneſs in the formation of the *material* World, are ſince diſcovered to be moſt uſeful Contrivances, and Evidences of the moſt perfect and conſummate Wiſdom; ſo in the government of the *rational and intelligent* World, in the diſpenſations of *Providence* towards Mankind, thoſe very things, which by ſome Philoſophers of Old were urged as Arguments of an Evil Principle, of a Miſchievous Supreme Cauſe, co-ordinate and repugnant to God the Author of all Good; will, at the Great Day, (when the Reaſons of things and the whole Counſel of God ſhall be more perfectly diſcloſed,) appear all to be moſt *Wiſe*, and *Gracious*, and *Good*.

Did our *Afflictions come forth of the duſt*, and our *troubles ſpring out of the ground*; were there no other cauſe to produce them, no other Hand to direct them, no other Counſel to deſign them, no other Power to over-rule and remove them; than the accidental concourſe of Senſeleſs Atoms, than the fortuitous reſults of unguided Matter and Motion, than the blind Effects of inevitable Fate, or the mere Jumbles of unintelligible Chance; it is plain there could be no rational Comfort and Support to a conſiderate Mind, under the various Misfortunes and Calamities of Life. For what is the Hope of the Unbeliever, when God taketh away his Soul; I ſhould ſay, when *Fate* or *Chance* taketh away his Soul? And on what ground can the Confidence of the Atheiſt rely? His Expectations at beſt are thin as a Spider's Web; and his Hopes as the light Chaff, which the Wind ſcattereth away from the Face of the Earth. His Proſperity and Mirth can be but for a moment, and his Adverſity muſt of neceſſity terminate in Deſpair. For what Relief is to be expected from Fate or Chance, which has no Underſtanding? and what Support is *that* Man capable of in the days of Affliction, who does not believe things are guided by a wiſe hand, which can turn every thing finally to our Advantage? How weak, how empty a Satisfaction is it, to be told that our Miſeries ariſe from the *Neceſſity of Fate*, and therefore that it is to no purpoſe not to be willing to ſubmit to them! How ſmall a Comfort is it, to conſider that *Others* perhaps are miſerable as well as we; and that therefore we have no greater reaſon to complain, than they! How poor, how inſipid a relief is it, to underſtand that it cannot be long before all the Miſeries and Calamities of Life will have an End put to them by *Death*; if at the ſame time our View be wholly bounded by that dark Proſpect, and there be no Expectation beyond the Grave? And yet theſe are *all* the Comforts that Infidelity can afford, and *all* the Hopes of him that is *without God in the World*. In the moment of his *Proſperity*, he may ſay with the Fool in the Book of *Wiſdom*; ch. ii. ver. 6. 3; *Come on, let us enjoy the good things that are preſent, and let us ſpeedly uſe the creatures like as in youth*; For our Life *being extinguiſhed, our body ſhall be turned into aſhes, and our ſpirit ſhall vaniſh as the ſoft air.* But in the days of *Sorrow*, he will be convinced of his Folly; and repent and groan for Anguiſh of Spirit, when it will be too late; and his Rejoycing will be turned into Deſpair. His paſt Pleaſures will be remembred but as a Dream, and ſeem to him as a Shadow that departeth; his *preſent Trouble* will be inſupportable; and his Fears of what may poſſibly be *to come*, will be unmixt and without Hope. The pretences of Philoſophy, of Fortitude and Firmneſs of Spirit, of deſpiſing Pain, and looking upon Death as Nothing, and as merely putting an end to our Being; will appear to be vain Words, and mere empty Deluſion; and *He only* is capable of any true Comfort and Support, who is convinced that all things are directed *well* and to *good Ends*, by the

the All-wise Government of the Providence of God; and who, by a life of Piety and true Holiness, has secured to himself finally, the Favour of that Supreme Disposer of all things. SERM. X.

The same *Appearances of Nature*, the same *Arguments of Reason*, which prove to us the Being or Existence of God; prove also his Providence in governing the World, and his inspection and directing of all Events: So that even from the *Light of Nature* itself, which to impartial and well-disposed Persons gives sufficient Evidences of the Being and Providence of God, it is manifest that no Affliction, no Trouble of any kind, can possibly come upon us without his Appointment or Permission. And *the Scripture*, to confirm and strengthen our Faith and Dependence upon God at all Times and under all circumstances, is very large and express in this particular. *I am the Lord, and there is none else*; —— *I form the Light, and create Darkness*; *I make Peace, and create Evil*, (not *moral*, but *natural Evil*;) *I the Lord do all these things*: Is. xlv. 7; *The Lord killeth, and maketh alive*; *he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up*: 1. Sam. ii. 6; *He maketh sore, and bindeth up*; *he woundeth, and his hands make whole*; Job v. 18. *Out of the mouth of the most High, proceedeth not Evil and Good?* Lam. iii. 38. And it is a very remarkable Expression in the Law of *Moses*, that when a Man was smitten and killed by Accident, without any ill Intention at all in him that did it, his Misfortune is thus described: *Exod.* xxi. 13; *If a man lie not in wait, but* God *deliver him into his hand*; To signify, that even those things, which to *Us* seem the most casual and merely accidental, yet in respect of *God* are really Providential, and could not happen but by his suffering them and (for wise Reasons) permitting them to be done. That is; they are not indeed done always by his Direction and Appointment; but, because they could not come to pass *at all* without his Knowledge and Permission, therefore we may be assured that he intends them for good, and to make use of them to serve some wise and good Ends of Providence, in that it was not his pleasure, and he did not think fit to over-rule and prevent them. And accordingly the Prophet *Amos* puts the Question universally, not only concerning Judgments sent immediately by God's Command and Appointment, but concerning *all*, even *those* also which we call *natural* and *accidental* Evils; *Shall there be Evil in a City, and the Lord hath not done it?* ch. iii. ver. 6. Which Words some have been so very unreasonable as to interpret even of *Sin* itself or *moral Evil*; (which is the highest Absurdity and Blasphemy:) But with respect to all *natural* Evils, (since second causes have no Powers but from and in subordination to the first,) it is strictly true: And therefore, even though we could not at all understand the Reasons why God is pleased to permit them, yet since we are sure they cannot but be of his permission, we have more Reason with all Patience and Resignation to depend upon *him* that he intends and will direct them for good, than a Child can have, in things above its apprehension, to rely upon the Kindness of a most affectionate Parent. Ps. cxix. 75.

But 3*dly*, Though This might be a sufficient Satisfaction in *general*; yet further, We *are* able to instance in *many particular* wise and good Ends, for which Providence permits so many Afflictions to befal Mankind. The Consideration of which must be referred to another Opportunity.

SERMON XI.

Of Resignation to the Divine Will in Affliction.

[*A Sermon preached in Lent.*]

JOB v. 6, 7.

Although Affliction cometh not forth of the Dust, neither doth Trouble spring out of the ground, yet Man is born unto Trouble, as the Sparks fly upwards.

SERM. XI.

IN a foregoing Discourse, I have observed that these Words contain in them,

1. A pathetical description of the Weakness and Vanity, the Sorrows and Calamities of humane Life: *Man is born unto Trouble as the Sparks fly upwards.*

2. A Declaration, that these Miseries of humane life, do not arise from Chance or from Necessity, from blind Fate or unaccountable Accidents; but from the wise Disposition of the Providence of God, governing the World. *Affliction cometh not forth of the Dust, neither doth Trouble spring out of the Ground.* Wherein,

3. It is implied, and intended to be inferred, that there are many just and good, wise and useful Ends; upon account of which, God permits so many Afflictions to fall upon Mankind; and the consideration therefore of which, (so far as we can discover them in this present dark and imperfect State,) ought to teach us Patience and chearful Resignation to the Divine Will.

The two former of these I have already discoursed on; and shown, that, since *Afflictions do not come forth of the Dust*, do not arise from Chance or from Necessity; but are all under the Disposal of the All-Wise Providence of God, governing

governing the World; this one *general* conſideration alone, ought ſufficiently to ſecure our entire Truſt and Dependence upon God, our Hope and Confidence in Him; ſo as to be an abundant Support and Comfort to us, under all the poſſible Accidents and Calamities of Life; even though we could not *at all* underſtand any of the *grounds* of his Acting, and the *Reaſons* of his ſo dealing with us.

But ſeeing *this* is not wholly the Caſe; and that in this *general* Obſervation it ſeems moreover to be implied, and intended to be inferred, that there are alſo diſcoverable *in particular*, many juſt and good, wiſe and uſeful Ends; upon account of which, God permits ſo many Afflictions to fall upon Mankind; and the conſideration of which, ought to teach us Patience, and chearful Reſignation to the Divine Will: It remains therefore, that we proceed now, in the 3*d*, and *laſt* place, To conſider *what* are (ſome of the plaineſt and moſt ſatisfactory of) thoſe reaſons, that *we are* capable of diſcovering; upon account of which, it was beſt and fitteſt that things ſhould be ſo ordered as they are; and in conſideration whereof, we ought more *fully and readily* to acquieſce in the divine good pleaſure in all things.

And *firſt*, We are to conſider, that ſome of thoſe things which we uſually eſteem among the Troubles and Afflictions of life, are ſuch as may *juſtly* and muſt *neceſſarily* be reſolved into the *abſolute Sovereignty and Dominion* of God. Of this kind, are Mortality in general, and the Shortneſs of humane Life; the unequal Diſtribution of Riches and Honour, and the good things of this preſent Life; the different capacities, and abilities of Mind; the different tempers, and conſtitutions of body; the different ſtates and conditions, wherein God has originally placed men in the World. Of theſe things there *can*, there *needs* no other account to be given, than the abſolute Sovereignty and Dominion of God. For infinite Power, Wiſdom and Goodneſs, may diſplay itſelf in producing what Variety of Creatures he pleaſes; and in communicating to them his free Bounties, in what meaſure and proportion he thinks fit. He that had no Obligation, no Want or Neceſſity upon him, to give Being to any thing at all; may give Being to his Creatures for what Duration he pleaſes; and diſtribute his abſolute and unconditionate Favours, without giving *any* account of his Ways. It is no juſt ground of complaint in *Men*, that they were not created in the condition of *Angels*; any more than it is an injury to *inferiour Creatures*, that they are not indued with the Capacities of *Men*. Neither is it a wrong to thoſe who are born with lower capacities and to meaner circumſtances, that they are made inferiour to others; But they have *much more reaſon* to be thankful for what they *have*, than to be diſpleaſed for want of what they *have not*. It is ſufficient if, in matters of *Reward and Puniſhment*, God in the End deals equitably with all his rational Creatures; and diſpoſes of them according to the proportion of the ſeveral deſerts, of each of them, in their reſpective States. But in the *original appointment* of the *State* and *Condition* of their Nature, there is no room for any other conſideration, than that of the abſolute Sovereignty of infinite Power, and the various Exerciſe of infinite Wiſdom. The Servant who gained four Talents by the improvement of two, it was *juſt* that he ſhould be rewarded with four Cities; and that the reward of ten Cities ſhould be allotted to *him*, who by a right uſe of five Talents had improved them to Ten. But why *originally* the one ſhould be intruſted with five Talents, and the other but with two; of this there needs and *can* no other account be given, but this; *Is it not lawful for* God, *to do what he pleaſes with his own?* and *Shall the thing formed ſay unto him that formed it, why haſt thou made me thus? Hath not the Potter power over the clay, of the ſame lump to make one Veſſel to Honour and another to Diſhonour*? Not, one perſon unconditionately to *final Happineſs*, and another to *Miſery*; But (as the ſame Apoſtle expreſsly explains himſelf: 2 *Tim.* ii. 20;) *In a great houſe there are not only veſſels of Gold, and of Silver, but alſo of Wood and of Earth; and ſome to honour, and ſome to diſhonour.* That is: Hath not the Maſter a Right, to employ his Servants in what ſeveral Stations he pleaſes, more or leſs honourable;

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rable provided, in his final diſtribution, he deals equitably with each of them in their ſeveral and reſpective degrees? As the Glory of the *natural* World conſiſts in that beautiful *Variety* of things whereof the Whole is compoſed: So in the *Moral* World, God has made rational Creatures of *various* Capacities, and placed them in *different* Stations: And it imports not to each one's final State, *what* his preſent Station is, but *how well* he behaves himſelf in that Station. The Scripture, as well as the Reaſon of the Thing itſelf, frequently refers us to this Sovereign Power of God, in accounting for the unequal diſtribution of both temporal and ſpiritual Advantages. *He plucketh down one, and ſetteth up another*; *He maketh poor, and maketh rich*; *he bringeth low, and lifteth up*: He cauſeth one Nation or Perſon to be rich and powerful, and another to be poor and weak. He reveals himſelf to one People in one manner, and to another in a different manner; and in all this there is neither Reward nor Puniſhment, but the various exerciſe of his Wiſdom and Power over his Creatures, without wrong or injury to any of them. He choſe the Nation of the *Jews* to be his peculiar People, to reveal his Law to them in a particular manner, and to make them the Standard of true Religion to the World: *He did not deal ſo with any other nation, neither had the Heathen knowledge of his Laws.* And this St. *Paul* aſcribes to the abſolute Will and Pleaſure of God, who may diſpoſe of his unconditionate Favours in what manner and proportion he thinks fit: *Rom.* ix. 10, 11; *When Rebeckah had conceived by one, even by our Father Iſaac; the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil; that the purpoſe of God according to election might ſtand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was ſaid unto her, The elder ſhall ſerve the younger; As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Eſau have I hated.* Which Text, has *therefore only* ſeemed difficult, becauſe Men have not uſually attended *what* that purpoſe of God according to Election was, which the Apoſtle There declares ſhould ſtand: For, was it a Purpoſe of electing one to eternal Happineſs, and the other to eternal Miſery? No; but of cauling the *elder to ſerve the younger.* The Words themſelves are expreſs: *That the purpoſe of God,* ſaith he, *according to election might ſtand, not of works, but of him that calleth.* God might appoint whom he pleaſed, to be the Father of the more powerful Nation, the progenitor of his peculiar people; and yet there was plainly no unrighteouſneſs with God; no wrong or Injury done to *him*, upon whom that Favour was not conferred, which could of right be claimed by Neither. To apply this, or any other Texts of like importance, to Mens *final and eternal* eſtate of Rewards and Puniſhments in another World; is indeed charging God wrongfully, and putting the greateſt abuſe that can be upon Holy Scripture, wherein God ſo conſtantly declares that he is *no Reſpecter of Perſons*, and that every Man *ſhall be judged* finally *according to his works.* But *which* ſhall be *here* ſuperiour, and *which* ſhall ſerve; *who* ſhall *in this Senſe* be hated, and *who* beloved; (all which is comparative only, and not abſolute; and in which there is nothing of Reward or Puniſhment, but merely a variety of diſtribution of undeſerved Favours;) in this God has an abſolute Right of acting by his Sovereign Power and Supreme Authority, and of doing what he pleaſes with his own. And ſince every thing that we All enjoy, proceeds wholly from God's *free* goodneſs and bounty; no Man, whether he has received leſs or more, many advantages or fewer, has *any* juſt Reaſon of complaint, *any* ground to ſay unto his Maker, *Why haſt thou made me thus?* This is the account St. *Paul* gives, of God's firſt *calling* the people of the *Jews*; and the ſame he gives, of his afterwards *rejecting* them again, and taking in the *Gentiles. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compaſſion on whom I will have compaſſion:* That is, *God only*, and not ſhort-ſighted *Man*, is the proper Judge, upon *whom*, upon *what Perſons* or *Nations*, 'tis fitteſt and wiſeſt for him to beſtow his Favours. *Hath not the Potter power over the clay, of the ſame lump to make one veſſel unto honour and another unto diſhonour? What, if God, willing to ſhow his Wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-ſuffering the veſſels of wrath fitted to Deſtruction; And that he might make known the Riches of his Glory, on the veſſels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory? Even Us, whom he has called, not of the Jews only, but*

alſo

alſo of the Gentiles, Rom. ix. 15, 21, 22. In all which, there is no declaration of any *arbitrary* proceeding in God, with reſpect to the *laſt and great* judgment as ſome have very unreaſonably apprehended: (For, the *long-ſuffering* here mentioned towards *the veſſels of wrath*, i. e. the unbelieving *Jews*, was in expectation even of *Their* Repentance and Amendment; and the *veſſels of mercy* here deſcribed, are not particular perſons ſingly conſidered, but the *whole Body of Chriſtians* as oppoſed to the *whole Nation of the Jews*, and as including both *Gentile* as well as *Jewiſh* Believers; *Even Us*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *whom he has called, not of the Jews only, but alſo of the Gentiles?*) But the plain and whole intention of the words, is to juſtify God's dealing with the Nation of the *Jews*, in rejecting *them* and receiving in the *Gentiles*; and to ſhow, that Men have no juſt Reaſon to complain againſt God, for manifeſting his Power and Glory in different diſpenſations to different Perſons at different Times, and for diſtributing differently his undeſerved Bounty, and allowing Men various and different advantages, after ſuch manner as he himſelf thinks fit: Inaſmuch as they who enjoy the feweſt advantages, receive always more than they deſerve or can claim; and have no wrong or injury done to them, by the abounding of God's free Goodneſs to others. It was no injuſtice at the firſt to other Nations, that God, out of his free Bounty, was pleaſed to bleſs in a ſingular manner the Poſterity of faithful *Abraham* for many generations; nor was it afterwards any injury to the *Jews*, that God was pleaſed to receive the *Gentiles* likewiſe, into a participation of the ſame Favour and Bleſſings with themſelves. So far as the Advantages of God's peculiar people were *temporal*, the conſideration of his *Sovereign Power and Authority* is a ſufficient and ſatisfactory account of the Difference; But as to Mens *ſpiritual and eternal* concern, the *Judge of all the Earth* knows how to do what is right; *With Equity will he judge the Nations*, and will make an equitable and proportionable allowance, for the unequal circumſtances of every Man's Caſe. Yet, even *here* alſo, there is no injuſtice, in giving Men different opportunities and different advantages; in entruſting them with different talents; and putting into the Hands of Some, according to his own good pleaſure, a greater poſſibility of obtaining larger Rewards. Neither further in *this* likewiſe can there be any Ground of complaint, if he ſhall ſtill think fit to make uſe of his Supreme Right, in giving freely as great a recompence to Some of whom he has not exacted ſo ſevere a Service, as to Others who may imagine themſelves, by the performance of a ſtricter Duty, to have acquired for themſelves a title to a more ample Reward. Our Saviour repreſents this to us in the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, who having been hired at different Times of the Day, and receiving each of them in the Evening the ſame reward; thoſe which had been hired in the Morning, though they received their full payment, yet were diſpleaſed at their Lord's free bounty, in giving the ſame to thoſe who had been hired laſt; and *murmured againſt* him, *ſaying*; *Theſe laſt have wrought but one hour, and thou haſt made them equal unto Us, which have born the burden and heat of the Day*: *But he anſwered one of them, and ſaid*; *Friend, I do thee no wrong*; *didſt not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way*; *I will give unto this laſt, even as unto thee*: *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine Eye evil, becauſe I am good?* St. Matt. xx. 12. The Parable may be underſtood, to reſpect God's dealings either with the *Jews* and *Gentiles* in different Ages of the World, or with Perſons converted to the belief of the Goſpel in different Periods of their Lives. God's various diſtribution of his free Gifts and undeſerved Mercies, affords no juſt Reaſon of complaint to thoſe, who only want what no man has a right to claim, and what thoſe who have muſt acknowledge to be of mere bounty. And this is plainly the Caſe in moſt of thoſe things, which we are apt to look upon as ſome of the greateſt Afflictions and Calamities of Life. They often are not any real and poſitive infliction of Judgments from the hand of God, but merely the original differences of mens ſtate and circumſtances, the variety of God's Creation, the different Talents committed to Mens Charge, the different Stations God has placed Men in, for their various Tryals, and in order to the Exerciſe of a diverſity of Duties. *Poverty*

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has not always the nature of an affliction or judgment, but is rather merely a ſtate of life, appointed by God, for the proper tryal and exerciſe of the Virtues, of *Contentment*, Patience, and Reſignation: And for *one* Man to murmur againſt God, becauſe he poſſeſſes not thoſe Riches which he ſees given to another; is the *wrath* that *killeth the fooliſh man, and* the *envy* that *ſlayeth the ſilly one*; Job v. 2. The like may be ſaid of *want of Honour and Power*, want of *Children* to ſucceed in our Eſtates and Families, *Weakneſs* of *Body*, *Shortneſs* of *Life*, and the like; nay, and even of *Spiritual* diſadvantages themſelves; likewiſe *want of capacity* and good underſtanding, want of *knowledge* and inſtruction, want of many *opportunities* and means of improvement which others enjoy. None of all which, are any juſt ground of complaint againſt God, or any Reaſon why we ſhould not with all ſatisfaction acquieſce in his Divine Good pleaſure; ſince all theſe things are only different diſtributions of ſuch free Gifts, as he, not being obliged to beſtow on *any* Man, may therefore without controverſy divide to *every* Man in what meaſure and proportion he himſelf thinks fit: Only *This* we may depend upon, that in ſuch meaſure only will he *exact* our duty, as he enables us to *perform* it; and that to whom little is given, of him ſhall not be much required: And This brings all the *ſeeming inequalities* in the World, to a *real equality* at laſt; ſo that *he which gathers much, has nothing over*; *and he that gathers little, has no lack.* And we may juſtly apply to God's *general* dealings with all Mankind, the exclamation St. *Paul* uſes upon occaſion of his wonderful *particular* diſpenſations to the People of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*; *O the depth of the riches both of the Wiſdom and Knowledge of God*; *How unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!* In *all* circumſtances of Life therefore, we are not to be uneaſy that God has made us inferiour to others, or that he has ſet before us, greater hardſhips and difficulties to go through; or that he has given us leſs Abilities, and fewer Opportunities than others: But we are to apply ourſelves wholly, (with all acquieſcence and reſignation,) to the proper duties of *that* Station, or of *thoſe* circumſtances, wherein God has been pleaſed to place us. *Poverty* is not an Argument to envy the Rich; but a ſtrong Obligation to ſtudy the duties of Humility, Contentment and Reſignation. *Ignorance* and want of capacity, meanneſs of Parts and want of Inſtruction, is not a Reaſon to murmur that God has not entruſted us with *more* Talents; but an admonition to take care that we make a right Improvement of thoſe *few* that are given us. Weakneſs of *Body*, is not a juſt Occaſion to repine againſt God, for not giving us the Strength and Health wherewith he has bleſſed ſome others; but a continual Argument to us, to exerciſe and improve ſuch Virtues as are more peculiar to the *Mind*. The conſideration of the *Uncertainty* and *Shortneſs of Life* itſelf, ought not to make us ſpend our Time in fruitleſs complaints of the Vanity and Meanneſs of our State; but to cauſe us perpetually to conſider, that it is not of ſo great Importance how *long* we live, as how *well*: *For* (as it is excellently expreſſed in the Book of *Wiſdom*,) *honourable Age is not that which ſtandeth in length of Time, nor that is meaſured by Number of Years*; *but Wiſdom is the gray Hair unto Men, and an unſpotted Life is old Age.*

Secondly; It is to be conſidered, that a great part of the troubles of Life, and the Afflictions we are apt to complain of, are not the immediate and original appointment of *God at all*; but the mere *natural* Effects, and conſequences of our own Sins. 'Tis true, it *is* indeed the wiſe conſtitution of *Providence*, which thus ordered and diſpoſed the nature of things at firſt, that moſt Sins ſhould even in the *natural* conſequences of things, be ſome time or other attended with their proper puniſhment. But I conſider it not Now in *That reſpect*, as being, *upon the whole*, the wiſe Appointment of *God*, to convince us of the Folly of Sin, and to lead us to Repentance; but as being *in particular*, in the preſent ſtate and order of things, the mere *natural* Effect and Conſequence of our own fooliſh and ſinful choice. Which conſideration alone, ought to make us acquieſce with all Humility and Patience, under that Burden which not *God* but our *own hands* have laid upon us: For *why ſhould a living man complain, a man for the puniſhment of his Sins?*

Why

Why ſhould he murmur againſt *God*, when he *eateth* but *the Fruit of his own Ways*, and is *filled only with* the natural conſequences of *his own devices*? *The Fooliſhneſs of Man* (as *Solomon* excellently expreſſes it, *Prov.* xix. 3;) *perverteth* his own *way*, *and* then *his heart fretteth againſt the Lord.* Very unreaſonably and unjuſtly. For, if Poverty be the Effect of extravagance and proſuſeneſs, and a man's ſubſtance be conſumed by riotous living: If Pain and Diſeaſes of Body, be the Effect of Debauchery and intemperate Courſes; and the Comforts of Age, be prevented by the Follies of Youth: If Anxiety and continual Vexation of Mind, be the Vanity of Covetouſneſs; and the *ſore travel*, of him that *has neither Child nor Brother*; of whom the Scripture ſays, that *there is no End of all his labour, neither is his Eye ſatisfied with riches; neither ſaith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my Soul of good*; Theſe troubles, are ſuch as neither *come forth of the duſt, neither* do they *ſpring out of the ground*, neither can they be complained of as proceeding from the *hand of God*; but they are only the *natural* Effects of men's own Follies, and the fulfilling the prophecies ſo often repeated in Scripture, that they who *plow wickedneſs*, ſhall *reap iniquity*; (Hoſ. x. 13;) and they who *ſow iniquity* ſhall *reap vanity*, (Prov. xxii. 8;) And yet, even *Theſe* alſo, the Afflictions which are the conſequences of our own Folly, may by a wiſe improvement, by bearing them as becomes us, and by exerciſing ourſelves to Wiſdom under them; even *Theſe* alſo, may become the matter of an excellent Virtue, and may turn into the occaſion of much religious advantage. SERM. XI.

Thirdly, It is to be conſidered, that ſome of the greateſt afflictions and calamities of life, are the effects of God's publick judgments upon the World, for the wickedneſs and impiety of *others*. Wherein if virtuous and good men be ſometimes involved, it ought to be a ſufficient ſatisfaction to them to conſider, that *this* is not the proper time for Rewards and Puniſhments to take place upon particular perſons. And, ſince they know God has reſerved to *another ſtate* the final and equitable diſtribution of juſtice according to every man's deſert; wherein he will give a perfect *Account of all his Matters*; wherein every inequality ſhall be exactly ſet right, and every circumſtance of each perſon's caſe be conſidered and adjuſted; when God will perfectly juſtify himſelf in all his Proceedings, and *every mouth ſhall be ſtopped before him*; why ſhould they be uneaſy, that God *for the preſent* ſuffers ſecond cauſes to take their regular courſe, and does not work perpetual miracles to deliver them from the common incidents of humane nature, and from the publick misfortunes of the World? 'Tis recorded of *Joſiah* King of *Judah*, (2 Kings xxiii. 25;) that *like him was there no King before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his Soul, and with all his might, neither after him aroſe there any like him:* Yet *the Lord ſuffered him to fall by the ſword, and turned not from the fierceneſs of his great Wrath wherewith his anger was kindled againſt Judah, becauſe of all the Provocations that Manaſſeh his Predeceſſor had provoked him withal*; and *alſo for the innocent blood that he* had *ſhed, which the Lord would not pardon*; 2 Kings xxiv. 4. And in a general denunciation of the ſevereſt wrath of God againſt *Jeruſalem*, he threatens by the Prophet *Ezekiel*; ch. xxi. ver. 3; that he would *cut off from* it *the righteous and the wicked.* In which caſe, it ought to be a ſufficient ſatisfaction to truly pious and religious perſons, that God has reſerved for them their portion in another life.

Theſe are *Some* of the *Many* conſiderations, which ought to oblige us, in *all* Circumſtances of life whatſoever, *fully and readily* to acquieſce in the divine good pleaſure. There are others yet behind, which are grounds not only of *acquieſcence and Submiſſion*, but even of *Thankfulneſs* alſo to God for ſending upon us Afflictions greatly to our Advantage: Such as are thoſe which, by the more immediate appointment of God, are intended and fitted to teach us *Humility*, to lead us to *Repentance*, to *wean* us from an *overfond love of the World*, to make *Tryal and Improvement of our Faith*, and to make eminent *Examples* of Patience and Reſignation, Fortitude and Contempt of the World. But theſe I muſt refer to another Opportunity.

SERMON XII.

The End of GOD's afflicting Men.

[*A Sermon Preached in Lent.*]

JOB v. 6, 7.

Although Affliction cometh not forth of the Duſt, neither doth Trouble ſpring out of the Ground; yet Man is born unto Trouble as the Sparks fly upward.

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THAT none of the Afflictions which befal Mankind, are the Effects either of blind Chance or of fatal Neceſſity; but that they are all under the direction of infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs governing the World, and *in the general* intended by Providence ſome way or other for our advantage; I have already ſhown in a foregoing Diſcourſe. I have alſo propoſed *in particular* ſome of the many Conſiderations, which ought to teach us Acquieſcence and cheerful Submiſſion to the divine Good-pleaſure, under the ſeveral kinds and ſorts of Afflictions, which we are perpetually ſubject to in the preſent Life; Namely, that *ſome* of thoſe things which we uſually reckon among the Troubles of Life, are not properly *Judgments inflicted* upon us, but merely the Effects of God's variouſly exerciſing his Infinite Power and Wiſdom, his abſolute Sovereignty and Dominion over his Creatures, in placing Men originally in ſuch different States and Conditions as he himſelf thought fit; whereof *no man* has Reaſon to complain; becauſe what *every*

every man enjoys, in whatever proportion it be, is ſtill *all* only of free Goodneſs and mere Bounty: That ſome *others* of the Troubles we are apt to complain of, are nothing but the *natural* Conſequences of our own Sins; and therefore not at all chargeable upon God: That *others* of them, are the effects of God's *publick* Judgments upon a ſinful World; from partaking of which Calamities if *particular* good and pious Perſons are not exempted *at preſent*, is it not abundantly ſufficient that God has *hereafter* appointed for them a day of exacter retribution? Theſe are ſufficient grounds of *Contentment and Acquieſcence*, of willing *Submiſſion and Reſignation* to the Divine Will. But there are *other conſiderations* ſtill behind, (which I am *now* to proceed to ſpeak to,) which will appear to be Arguments, not of *Contentment* only and *patient Reſignation*, but even of *Thankfulneſs* alſo; Conſideration, which will ſhow, that moſt of the Afflictions we are apt to be uneaſy under, *far* from being Arguments of God's neglecting and diſregarding us, are ſome of the greateſt inſtances of his paternal Care and Affection towards us, and deſigned to tend very much to our particular benefit and advantage. The *Ends* of *this* kind, which we have Reaſon to believe God generally intends in the afflictions he is pleaſed to ſend upon us, may be reduced to theſe four.

1. To teach us *Humility*, and a juſt Senſe of our own Unworthineſs.
2. To lead us to *Repentance* for our paſt Errours.
3. To *wean* us from an over-fond Love of the preſent *World*. And,
4. To *try*, *improve*, and *perfect* our Virtues; and make ſome particular Perſons eminent Examples of Faith and Patience to the World.

1. To teach us *Humility*, and a juſt Senſe of our own *Unworthineſs*. Though *Pride evidently was not made for man*, *nor* a haughty Spirit *for him that is born of a Woman*; Though nothing is more abſurd and unnatural, than for *Duſt and Aſhes* to be lift up againſt its Maker; and for the Thing formed, to exalt itſelf againſt him that formed it; Though nothing can be more unreaſonable and ridiculous, than for *Man*, *whoſe breath is in his Noſtrils*, to deſpiſe his *Brother*, and to behave himſelf inſolently towards *him* who is of the *ſame Nature and Dignity*, as well as of *like Paſſions*, with himſelf; Yet in Fact ſo it is, that often *Man being in Honour*, *hath no underſtanding*; Pſ. xlix. 20; and, being puffed up with Proſperity, *conſidereth* not *whereof* he is *made*, and *remembreth* not *that* he is *but duſt*. Such is the Weakneſs of our Nature, that *when one is made rich*, *and when the glory of his houſe is increaſed*, he is very apt to forget, that *when he dieth*, *he ſhall carry nothing away with him*, and that *his glory ſhall not deſcend after him*. When *Power* is put into our hands, and a great Superiority of worldly Advantages gives us opportunity to judge in our own Caſes; we are extremely apt, to make *Will* ſucceed in the place of *Reaſon*, and *Humour or Paſſion* inſtead of *Right*. And this, not only in Perſons openly profane, and deſpiſers of Religion; but ſuch is the deceitfulneſs of mens Hearts, that in a long courſe of uninterrupted Proſperity, this ſecret Pride is apt to grow inſenſibly, even upon thoſe who do not affect to practiſe Iniquity. The almoſt only certain and effectual Remedy of which Evil, and the proper Preſervative againſt it, is that mixture of *Afflictions* and Diſappointments in the World, which, by the wiſe order and appointment of Providence, puts Men in mind of their own Weakneſs and Infirmity, brings them to a right Senſe of themſelves and of their dependence upon God, puts them upon ſerious conſideration of the true State and Circumſtances of things, and is therefore in Scripture called the *Diſcipline* and *Inſtruction* of the Lord; *Job.* xxxiii. 16; *Then he openeth the ears of men*, *and ſealeth their inſtruction*; *That he may withdraw man from his purpoſe*, *and hide pride from man*; —— *He is chaſtened alſo with pain upon his bed*, *and the multitude of his bones with ſtrong pain*: &c. St. *Paul* himſelf, though ſo eminent an Example of Piety, though ſo conſtant and indefatigable a Labourer in the work of his Miniſtry, though ſo ſingular an inſtance of

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Mortification and Contempt of the World; yet declares concerning himself; 2 *Cor.* xii. 7; that *leſt* he *ſhould be exalted above meaſure through the abundance of the Revelations, there was* ſent upon him an Affliction, which he calls *the meſſenger of Satan to buffet* him, *leſt he ſhould be exalted above meaſure.* Which if ſo great a Man as St. *Paul*, thought to be his own Caſe; Who is there in theſe later and corrupter Ages, that, in *Proſperity*, can be ſure of poſſeſſing his Soul with that Humility and Meekneſs, which Adverſity would teach him? or that, in *Adverſity*, can be ſure he ſhould not be puffed up by a courſe of Proſperity; ſo as to make it to himſelf a much greater Evil, than the Affliction he is now ſo uneaſy under, and the Uſefulneſs of which he is ſo loth to be ſenſible of?

Another *End* of God's ſending Afflictions and Troubles upon Men, is to lead us to *Repentance* for our paſt Errours. This is excellently expreſſed by *Elihu*; (Job xxxvi. 8;) *If they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction; then he ſheweth them their work, and their tranſgreſſions that they have exceeded; he openeth alſo their ear to diſcipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity.* When a wicked Man proſpers in all his worldly Affairs, and his deſigns are crowned with perpetual Succeſs; when he is ſurrounded on all ſides with undiſturbed Plenty, and all his appetites are gratified with the conſtant enjoyment of Eaſe and Pleaſure; 'tis no wonder that he forgets the God that is above, and conſiders not that *for all theſe things God will call him into judgment*: Good Admonition and Advice make no impreſſion upon his Mind, and the ſerious exhortations of Religion find no room to enter: He is apt to put far from him the Evil day; and to ſay to his Soul, *Take thine eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry*; we will *fill ourſelves* now *with new wine, and to-morrow ſhall be as this day and much more abundant*; (Iſ. lvi. 12.) Perſons in *this* State, the Scripture every where repreſents as in the moſt dangerous condition: *Ye have lived in pleaſure on the earth*, ſaith St. *James, and been wanton; ye have nouriſhed your hearts as in a day of ſlaughter*; Jam. v. 5. *Wo to them that are at eaſe in Zion*; Amos vi. 1. *I am very ſore diſpleaſed with the Heathen that are at eaſe*; Zech. i. 15. *Moab hath been at eaſe from his Youth, and he has ſettled on his lees*; Jer. xlviii. 11; *i. e.* has gone on careleſsly, in a long and uninterrupted courſe of Wickedneſs. The *greateſt* Bleſſing and Happineſs, that *can* befal ſuch Perſons as theſe; the *greateſt inſtance*, of the *mercy* of God towards them; is, the ſending upon them ſome great Affliction; which, like a ſevere medicine in a very dangerous diſtemper, may awaken them out of their Lethargy and Stupidity; may cauſe them to *conſider*, and entertain ſober Thoughts; may bring them to a right underſtanding, of themſelves and of their own Danger. The *ſilent* inſtruction, of Reaſon and true Wiſdom; the ſoft voice of God, in the gentle admonitions of Conſcience not yet terrified with any *great* Fear, is not attended to, by inconſiderate Perſons; is not heard in the Hurry of Paſſions; that have been long uſed to prevail; and among a multitude of Appetites, which have been conſtantly accuſtomed to be gratified without denial. But when the *Judgments* of God *are* abroad *in the Earth*, then *the inhabitants of the world will learn righteouſneſs*; Iſ. xxvi. 9: *Then* Men begin to *conſider* with themſelves, what their State and Condition is; and *Conſideration*, is the foundation of Repentance, the firſt motive and beginning of Religion. Of This, an eminent inſtance is recorded in the Hiſtory of *Manaſſeh*; who, in his Proſperity *made Judah and the inhabitants of Jeruſalem to err, and to do worſe than the Heathen whom the Lord had deſtroyed before the children of Iſrael*: But in his captivity, *when he was in affliction, he beſought the Lord his God, and humbled himſelf greatly before the God of his Fathers*; 2 Chr. xxxiii. 9, 12. And the example of his *Repentance* was afterwards as eminent, as that of his *Impiety* before had been pernicious. This is the proper effect of God's *Judgments* in the World; And if theſe laſt and ſevereſt Exhortations to Repentance have not that due effect upon Sinners; their Caſe *then* becomes deſperate and without hope. Nothing *then* remains, but that God leave them to themſelves; For, *why ſhould they be ſtricken any more?* they *will revolt more and more*;

more; Is. i. 5. This is the greatest and most extreme, of all the Temporal Curses of God; *I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery*; Hos. iv. 14. And 'tis the proper consequence of not being brought to Repentance by this *last* Admonition even by *Afflictions themselves*. Thus God complains of the impenitency of the *Jews*, Am. iv. 6, &c. *I have given you want of bread in all your places, and have withholden the rain from you, and have smitten you with blasting and mildew; yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord. I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt; your young men have I slain with the sword; I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah; yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord.* And 'tis set down as part of the character of the *Kingdom of the Beast*, the Kingdom of *Antichristian Tyranny*, the corrupteſt State of Men that ever was in the World. *Rev.* xvi. 9, 11; that they *blasphemed the name of God, because of their pains* and their plagues, but *repented not of their deeds, to give glory to the God of Heaven:* That is, to return from their Idolatries, Superstitions and Follies, to the rational Worship of the True God, in Righteousness, Charity and Truth. This Incorrigibleness, is the worst and most desperate state, that wicked men can possibly arrive at, in the present World: But the *proper and natural* Effect of God's Judgments, if they would hearken to them, is to lead them to Repentance. *Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord*; Lam. iii. 39, 40.

Now if Afflictions be thus fitted, in their proper Tendency, to convert the *wickedest* of men that are not utterly incorrigible; much *more* are they suited to convince *good* men of their failings, to make them sensible of their Errours, to bring them to more frequent and serious Consideration, and to a more perfect Repentance and Amendment. The very *best* of men, are far from being perfect; and *too many* good men, have even *great* imperfections; which they are not duly sensible of, but in a day of Affliction; and there are many Duties, and many Doctrines in Scripture, which men are not apt to understand rightly, but in a time of Sorrow, and more serious Consideration. *David* himself confesses; *Ps.* cxix. 71, 67; *It is good for me, that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes*; For, *before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word.* And that great man *Job*, after his severe tryal, acknowledges before God; (*Job* xlii. 5, 6;) *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.* The Sons of *Jacob* were never truly sensible of the greatness of their Crime in selling their Brother, till they found themselves in great distress in *Egypt*; *And* Then *They said one to another*, (Gen. xlii. 21;) *We are verily guilty concerning our Brother, in that we saw the anguish of his Soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear, therefore is this distress come upon us.* And of the *whole* Nation of the *Jews*, 'tis remarked by the Psalmist, (*Ps.* lxxviii. 34;) that *when he slew them, then they sought him, and returned, and enquired early after God; and remembred that God was their Rock, and the High God their Redeemer.*

Upon *this* account, the Afflictions that God sends upon his people and servants, are so frequently declared in Scripture to be Evidences of his *Love* and *Care* towards them. *When we are judged*, (saith St. *Paul*,) *we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world*; 1 *Cor.* xi. 23. *And our Lord himself declares*; *Rev.* iii. 19; *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent.* Which Exhortation the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* thus excellently paraphrases: *My Son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth:* If *we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For They verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of his Holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless*

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afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteouſneſs, unto them which are exerciſed thereby; Heb, xii. 5, &c. The Apoſtle allows, that Afflictions cannot indeed but be grievous to humane Nature, when they are actually *upon* us: But the Conſideration of the great advantage they *may* and are *intended* to turn to, by religious Improvement; is abundantly ſufficient to make *any* ingenuous and conſiderate temper, (which ſuffers not paſſion and preſent uneaſineſs to prevail *wholly* over Reaſon,) to ſay with *Eli*, *It is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth him good*; and with pious *Job*, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away*; *Bleſſed be the Name of the Lord*: For, *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and ſhall we not* (patiently) *receive evil?*

There *is one* way, by which Afflictions of *this* kind, namely, ſuch as are ſent upon us by way of *correction*, may in great meaſure be prevented; and That is, if we would take care *ſo* to behave ourſelves, as not to ſtand in *need* of them; *ſo* to *judge ourſelves*, as *not to be judged* of the *Lord*. *Job*, xxxii. 27. God *looketh upon men*; *and if any ſay, I have ſinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profiteth me not*; *he will deliver his ſoul from going into the pit, and his life ſhall ſee the light*. But This muſt be underſtood *only* of *this one* particular kind of Afflictions; ſuch as are intended for our *correction*, and to lead us to *Repentance* for ſome *particular Sins*

3. Another *End* of God's ſending Afflictions and Troubles upon men, is to *wean us from an over-fond love of the preſent world*. There is nothing that more hinders mens progreſs in Religion, nothing that more ſoftens the minds, and cools the Zeal even of good and well-diſpoſed perſons, than a conſtant, careleſs, habitual enjoyment of, and affection to, even *thoſe* pleaſures of Life, which cannot perhaps be charged with being directly ſinful: *O Death*, ſays the wiſe Son of *Sirach*, Ecclus. xli. 1; *How bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that liveth at reſt in his poſſeſſions, unto the man that has nothing to vex him, and that hath proſperity in all things*! As a continual Calm corrupteth the Waters; ſo a long and uninterrupted Proſperity, is a perpetual Danger and Temptation. Of the people of the *Jews* 'tis obſerved; *Deut.* xxxii. 15; that when *Jeſhurun* waxed *fat*, he *kicked*, and *forſook the God that made him, and lightly eſteemed the rock of his ſalvation*. And it is no leſs true of the *Chriſtian* Church, that when, upon the Emperour's firſt becoming Chriſtian, it began to receive worldly Encouragement; the Contentions among Chriſtians multiplied, and the Purity of their Manners decreaſed. And in our *own* Nation it has been juſtly obſerved, that true Religion never had ſo remarkable an influence upon men's Lives and Manners, as at ſuch times when we were moſt apprehenſive of its being in danger to be removed from us. For this reaſon God has ſeldom choſen to make his beſt Servants the moſt proſperous in the world. The Patriarchs did but *ſojourn in the land of promiſe, as in a ſtrange country, dwelling in tabernacles*, and *confeſſing that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims in the earth*; *For they looked for a city which had foundations, whoſe builder and maker is God*; Heb. xi. 9, 10. And our Saviour inculcates no one Thing ſo often upon his Diſciples, as the Danger of worldly Eaſe and Plenty, and the *Bleſſedneſs* of *them that mourn*.

Yet, on the other ſide, *Afflictions* have alſo their proper Temptations, to Impatience, and Diſcontent, and Complaining againſt God; and *Proſperity*, if well employed, *may* become the Matter of an excellent Virtue: For *Bleſſed is the rich, that is found without blemiſh, and hath not gone after gold*; that *hath been tried thereby, and found perfect*; that *might offend, and hath not offended*; or might *do evil, and hath not done it*; Ecclus. xxxi. 8. 10. Wherefore it is beſt for *us*, not to be ſollicitous after either State; but, with all Submiſſion, to leave that wholly to God; who knows, much better than we, what is moſt convenient for us.

4*thly*, and *Laſtly*; Another *End* of God's ſending Afflictions upon men, is to *try*, *improve*, and *perfect* their Virtues, and make eminent *Examples* of their *Faith* and *Patience*. This was the caſe of *Job*, who was afflicted by the immediate hand of *God*; and this was the caſe of the *Apoſtles*, who were permitted

mitted to be perſecuted by *wicked men*; and St. *Paul* tells us concerning our Saviour himſelf: *Heb.* ii. 10.) that he was *made perfect through ſufferings*. Of ſuch Afflictions as theſe, the Scripture declares that they are to be *gloried in*, becauſe they *work patience*: (Rom. v. 3. and Jam. i. 3;) that they *fall out unto the furtherance of the Goſpel*: (Phil. i. 12;) that they are a *tryal of Faith much more precious than of gold that periſheth, though it be tried with fire*; (1 Pet. i. 7.) That, by theſe, *many are purified and made white and tried*; (Dan. xii 10; and xi. 35:) *And having been a little chaſtiſed, they ſhall be greatly rewarded; for God proved them, and found them worthy for himſelf; As gold in the furnace has he tried them, and received them as a burnt-offering; And in the time of their viſitation they ſhall ſhine, and run to and fro like ſparks among the ſtubble; They ſhall judge the nations, and have dominion over the people; and their Lord ſhall reign for ever*; (Wiſd. iii. 5, &c.)

I ſhall but juſt mention two inferences, from what has been ſaid, to conclude.

And *1ſt*, From what has been ſaid it appears, that it is a very wrong and unjuſt Concluſion, to imagine with *Job*'s friends, that whoever is much afflicted, muſt conſequently, have been very wicked, and that God is very angry with him. When a Man's *own* Conſcience can apply his *own* Affliction to his paſt Sins, it is indeed very juſt and reaſonable, that he ſhould accept it as the Puniſhment of Sin, and as an Argument to Repentance; But he muſt by no means make *another* Man's Affliction, an occaſion of cenſuring his Neighbour; For, on the contrary, the Scripture declares, that *happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore deſpiſe not thou the chaſtning of the Almighty; for he maketh ſore, and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole*; Job v. 17. *Bleſſed is the man whom thou chaſteneſt, O Lord, and teacheſt him out of thy law*; Pſ. xciv. 12. And St. *James*, ch. i. ver. 12; *Bleſſed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he ſhall receive the crown of life.*

2dly; From what has been ſaid, there appears great Reaſon, for Men to reſign themſelves with all patience to the Will of God; and to rely upon him with full Truſt and Aſſurance, (in *all poſſible* circumſtances of life,) that he will direct things finally to our beſt advantage. *Ecclus.* ii. 4.; *Whatſoever is brought upon thee, take cheerfully; and be patient when thou art changed to a low eſtate; For gold is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adverſity.* This was the practice of *David*; who, when he *was greatly diſtreſſed, encouraged himſelf in the Lord his God*; 1 Sam. xxx. 6. And This was the Reſolution of the *Prophet*, wherewith I ſhall conclude; *Habbak.* iii. 17; *Though the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit be in the vines*; though *the labour of the olive ſhall fail, and the fields ſhall yield no meat*; though *the flock ſhall be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall be no herd in the ſtalls*; *Yet will I rejoyce in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my Salvation.*

SERMON XIII.

The Event of Things not always anſwerable to Second Cauſes.

[*A Faſt-Sermon.*]

ECCLES. ix. 11.

I returned, and ſaw under the Sun, that the Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong, neither yet bread to the Wiſe, nor yet Riches to men of Underſtanding, nor yet Favour to men of Skill; but Time and Chance happeneth to them All.

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THERE are ſome ſort of perſons in the World ſo ſlothful and negligent in their own Affairs, ſo hardly prevailed upon to undertake any thing that requires labour and diligence, ſo eaſily diſcouraged by any appearance of ill Succeſs, or ſo heedleſs and unactive in the proſecution of whatever they are about; as if they were of opinion even in *temporal* matters, what in ſome Syſtems of Religion has been abſurdly affirmed concerning *Spirituals*, that *God* does *every* thing *in* men and for men, leaving *nothing* for them to do for *themſelves*; or as if they thought That Precept to be *literal* and *univerſal*, which our Saviour ſpake, with the *Latitude of a moral admonition*, to the *Apoſtles only*, and upon an *extraordinary Occaſion*; *Take no Thought for the morrow, what ye ſhall eat, or what ye ſhall drink, or wherewithal ye ſhall be clothed.* Such perſons as theſe, the wiſe Man elegantly deſcribes in his Book of *Proverbs*: *The Sluggard*, ſaith he, *will*

Ch. xx. 4.

not

not plow by reaſon of the Cold; therefore ſhall he beg in Harveſt, and have nothing: The ſlothful man ſaith, There is a Lion without; I ſhall be ſlain in the Streets; Prov. xxii. 13: And ch. xxiv. 30; *I went by the Field of the ſlothful, and by the Vineyard of the man void of underſtanding; and lo, it was all grown over with Thorns, and Nettles had covered the Face thereof, and the Stone-Wall thereof was broken down;----- So ſhall thy Poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy Want as an armed man.* Nor is his *Reproof* and *Admonition* to thoſe who are guilty of this Folly, leſs elegant than his *Deſcription* of them; ch. vi. 6; *Go to the Ant, thou ſluggard; conſider her ways, and be wiſe; Which having no guide, overſeer, or ruler,* yet *provideth her meat in the Summer, and gathereth her Food in the Harveſt.* And in the Words immediately before my Text, *Eccles.* ix. 10; *Whatſoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with* all *thy Might*; do it with Diligence; do it with Attention, Induſtry, and Care.

There are *Others*, in a *contrary* Extreme; who rely with ſuch confidence on the Effects of their own Wiſdom and Induſtry, and ſo preſumptuouſly depend upon the natural and regular Tendencies of ſecond Cauſes; as if they thought, either there was no Superiour Cauſe at all, on which the Frame of Nature depended; or at leaſt, that the Providence of God did not condeſcend to direct the Events of things, in this lower and uncertain World. And Theſe, are elegantly reproved in the words of my Text; *I returned and ſaw under the Sun, that the Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong, neither yet Bread to the Wiſe, nor yet Riches to men of Underſtanding, nor yet Favour to men of Skill; but Time and Chance happeneth to them All.* I Returned: That is; In that vaſt Compaſs of Knowledge which *Solomon* had, in being able to ſurvey the whole Extent of Nature, and to obſerve the Tempers and Diſpoſitions of men, and the different Events of Things in all variety of Times and Circumſtances; he *turned* his Thoughts and Obſervations from *one Subject* to *another*. In the verſe *before* the Text, he views the *careleſs* or *negligent* part of mankind, and exhorts *them* to *diligence*: And then *I returned*, ſaith he, in the Words of the Text; that is, he turned his View the *other* way towards the *confident* or *preſumptuous*; And *them* he bids to take notice, that the *Race* is not always to the *Swift*, nor the *Battle* to the *Strong*; (that is,) that the *Events* of Things do not always anſwer to the *Probabilities* of ſecond Cauſes, unleſs the Wiſdom of God thinks fit by the direction of his good Providence to make thoſe Cauſes ſucceſsful. *I returned and ſaw* under the Sun; that is, in the *whole Courſe* of this lower and uncertain World, in the whole compaſs of Humane Affairs, in the Hiſtories of all Times or Ages, and in the Events that have happened to all Nations or People; I obſerved, ſaith he, upon the largeſt View and moſt extenſive Experience, that the *Race* is often *not* to the *Swift*, nor the *Battle* to the *Strong*. The *Reaſon why* the Events of Things do frequently fail in this manner, of anſwering to the natural Probabilities of ſecond Cauſes; is becauſe many little and unforeſeen Accidents unavoidably interpoſing, do very often change the whole Courſe of things, and produce an Event quite contrary to what in all reaſonable probability was to have been expected. The *ſwifteſt Racer*, upon the leaſt accidental Slip, loſes the Prize to an Adverſary much ſlower than himſelf; and the *Potenteſt* Armies, upon the leaſt Diſorder befalling them in a day of Battle, have been forced to leave the Victory to an Enemy whom they before deſpiſed for his inferiour Force. *Accidents* theſe things appear to *Men*, becauſe not poſſible to be foreſeen or prevented by *our* ſhort and imperfect Underſtandings: But, in the hands of *Providence*, the Cauſes and Reaſons of theſe even the *minuteſt* Accidents are all as clearly and diſtinctly known and determinate, as the *groſſeſt* and moſt *obvious* Cauſes are apparently diſcerned by us. And by means of theſe unforeſeen Cauſes, does God in his Great Government of the Univerſe, conſtantly bring about his own Deſigns, in Bleſſing or Puniſhing Nations according to his own good pleaſure. *Amos* ii. 14; *The Flight ſhall periſh from the Swift, and the ſtrong ſhall not ſtrengthen his Force, neither ſhall the mighty deliver himſelf; Neither ſhall He ſtand, that handleth the bow; and he that is ſwift of Foot,*

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It follows; *neither yet Bread to the Wise, nor yet Riches to men of Understanding, nor yet Favour to men of Skill.* That is: As Strength and Agility of *Body*, are not always successful in proportion to the Degree of those Faculties; nor Powerful Armies Victorious, in proportion to the Numbers they consist of: So the Faculties and Abilities of the *Mind* likewise, Wisdom and Understanding, Dexterity and Skill; are not always successful, as might regularly be expected, in obtaining Riches, and Honour, Favour and Dignity in the World; But unseen Accidents, (*Accidents* with regard to *Men*, but with *God* wise Dispensations of *Providence*,) invisibly and inexplicably turn the Course even of *these* things also: For *Time and Chance happeneth to them All*: Is. xliv. 25; God *turneth* wise *men backward, and maketh their Knowledge Foolish.*

Having, thus, briefly explained the *Meaning* of the several Phrases contained in the Text; the *Doctrinal Observations* I shall now draw from thence, are as follows.

1st; We may observe, that what Men vulgarly call *Chance* or unforeseen *Accident*, is in Scripture always declared to be the *determinate Counsel and Providence of God.* What careless and inconsiderate Men ascribe in common Speech to *Chance* or *Fortune*; that is, to *nothing at all*, but a mere empty word, signifying only their *Ignorance* of the true Causes of things, this the Scripture teaches *Us* to ascribe to the all-seeing and all-directing Providence of God; that we may *acknowledge* Him *in all our Ways*; and be sensible of the True Author, from whom all the *Good* and all the *Evil* that befalls us, does either *mercifully* or *justly* proceed: *Dan.* iv. 35; *He doth according to his Will in the Army of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou?* When a person is slain by *Chance* or *Accident*, as Men vulgarly speak; the Scripture more accurately expresses it, saying, that God *delivered* such a one, *into the hand* of him that slew him without Design; *Exod.* xxi. 13. And in *all other* Instances, the same Notion is every where kept up in Scripture: *Prov.* xvi. 33; *The Lot is cast into the Lap, but, the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.* And when the Apostles *chose by Lot* a Successor to *Judas*, they expressed their Sense of the divine Providence in the following words: *Acts* i. 24; *Thou, Lord, which knowest the Hearts of all men, show whether of these Two thou hast chosen.* And Thus likewise in the words in the Text; it is the supreme Superintendency of *Providence* over all Events, which *Solomon* meant to establish, when he saith, *Time and Chance happeneth to them All.*

Neither is it, (as some, with very weak Pretences to Reason, have in this Case been apt to imagine;) it is not I say, merely in a *pious manner of Expression*, that the Scripture thus ascribes every Event to the Providence of God, but it is *strictly* and *philosophically true* in Nature and Reason, that there is *no such thing* as *Chance* or *Accident*; it being evident that those words do not signify any thing *really existing*, any thing that is truly an *Agent* or the *Cause* of any Event; but they signify, *merely* Mens *Ignorance* of the real and immediate Cause. And This is so True, that very many even of Those who have no Religion,

Religion, nor any Senſe at all of the Providence of God; yet know very well by the Light of their own natural *Reaſon*, that there neither is nor can be any ſuch thing as *Chance*, that is, any ſuch thing as an Effect without a Cauſe; And therefore what *Others* aſcribe to *Chance*, *They* aſcribe to the operation of *Neceſſity* or *Fate*. But *Fate* alſo is itſelf in reality as *truly Nothing*, as *Chance* is. Nor is there *in Nature* Any *Other Efficient* or proper *Cauſe* of any Event; (of any *Event*, I ſay: For concerning *Truths* in Themſelves eſſentially, eternally and invariably neceſſary, I am not ſpeaking: But of all the variable *Events* that happen in the Univerſe, there is and can be in Nature no other proper and *efficient* Cauſe;) but only the *Free Will* of *rational and intelligent* Creatures, acting within the Sphere of their limited Faculties; and the *Supreme Power of God*, directing, by his omnipreſent Providence, (according to certain Wiſe Laws or Rules, eſtabliſhed by, and entirely depending upon his own good pleaſure,) the inanimate Motions of the whole material and unintelligent World. SERM. XIII.

2dly, From the words of the Text I obſerve, that the all-directing Providence of God, which governs the Univerſe; does not ſuperintend only the *Great* Events in the World, the Fates of Nations and Kingdoms; ſo that, without the direction of Providence, the *ſtrongeſt* and moſt numerous Armies are not victorious in *Battle*; but its Care extends, even to the Concerns of *ſingle* Perſons; ſo that, without the Bleſſing of *God*, neither *Riches*, nor *Favour*, nor *any temporal Advantage*, can certainly be obtained by any thing that *Man* can do: Nay, that even in matters of ſtill *ſmaller* moment, not ſo much as a *Race* is gained by the *Swift*, without the hand of Providence directing the Event. When Men obſerve how *Our* Attention is diſtracted with a multiplicity of Objects, and can very hardly be fixed to no more than one thing at once; they are too careleſsly apt to imagine, that Providence itſelf either cannot, or that 'tis beneath its Dignity to condeſcend, to interpoſe in the numberleſs ſmall events of Nature or Chance. But the *Scripture* tells us otherwiſe, and *right Reaſon* alſo joins with it herein. For as *Chance* is nothing, ſo *Nature* alſo is nothing but an empty word. Every *Effect*, every *Event*, muſt have a *real Cauſe*; muſt proceed, immediately or mediately, from That which has a *True Exiſtence* and *Active Power*. And to an omnipreſent Mind, there is no more difficulty in attending to *every thing* at one and the ſame Time, than to *any one thing*. Not only *piouſly* therefore, but even with the *ſtricteſt and moſt philoſophical Truth of expreſſion*, does the Scripture tell us, that God *commandeth the Ravens*, 1 Kings xvii. 4; that they are *His* directions, which *even the Winds and the Seas obey*; that he cauſes His *Sun to riſe on the Evil and on the Good*, that God *prepared a Gourd*, and *a Worm* to *ſmite* it, that it *withered*, Jonah iv. 7; that God *feedeth the Fowls of the Air*, Matt. iv. 26; and *without Him, not a ſparrow falls to the Ground*; ch. x. 29: Nay, that He *clothes* even the *Lilies*, *and the Graſs of the field*, Matt. vi. 30; and, with Him, *the very Hairs of our Head are all numbered*.

'Tis true; All theſe Things are plainly owing to *Second Cauſes*. And ſo likewiſe are all the *greater* Inſtances mentioned by *Solomon* in the Text. 'Tis as much according to the Courſe of *Nature*, that the *Strong* ſhould *ſometimes* loſe a Battle by *Accident*, as that they ſhould *generally* gain it by *Strength*; and that *unforeſeen Hindrances* ſhould *ſometimes* cauſe the *ſwifteſt Runner* to loſe the Race, as that *Agility and Nimbleneſs of Body* ſhould make him *generally* win it. My,

3d Obſervation therefore is; that things being brought about according to the courſe of *Nature* by *Second* Cauſes, is not at all inconſiſtent with their being nevertheleſs *juſtly and truly* aſcribed to the *Providence of God*. 'Tis *Time and Chance* ſays the Text, that *happens to them All*; that happens frequently to prevent *all* the Probabilities there mentioned. The wiſe Man does not hereby mean, that they are prevented by *Miracle*: For then he would not have uſed the vulgar words, of *Time and Chance*. Nor does he mean on the contrary, that they are prevented by Blind and unintelligent *Fate*: For This would have been

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contrary to the whole Deſign of his Book, and of all the reſt of the Scripture, as well as to common Reaſon: But his Meaning is; that the *Providence of God*, by means of *natural Cauſes*, which are all entirely of *His* appointment, and *Inſtruments only* in *His* hand; does often, for wiſe Reaſons in his government of the World, diſappoint the moſt probable expectations. Ridiculous therefore is the Arguing of the Infidel and Irreligious; who preſently thinks himſelf ſecure of excluding the *Providence of God*, if he can but ſhow a thing to be brought about by *Natural Cauſes*. Moſt *ridiculous*, I ſay, and *ignorant*, is this manner of reaſoning: For, *what* are *Natural* Cauſes? Nothing but thoſe *Laws* and *Powers*, which God merely of his *own good pleaſure* has implanted in the ſeveral parts of Matter, in order to make them Inſtruments of fulfilling his ſupreme Will. Which *Laws* and *Powers*, as he at *firſt appointed* them, ſo nothing but the ſame good pleaſure of God *continually preſerves them*. And they neither *exiſt* nor *operate* in any moment of Time, but by Influence and Action derived to them (mediately or immediately) from his all-governing Will. So that he foreſees perpetually, what Effect every Power and Operation of Nature tends to produce; and could (if he thought fit,) exactly with the ſame Eaſe, cauſe it to produce a *different* Effect, as that which it Now does. From whence it follows inevitably, to the entire Confuſion of Atheiſts, that all thoſe Things which they call *natural* Effects, are in very Truth as much the operation of God, (though perhaps not ſo immediately,) as even Miracles themſelves. And to argue againſt *Providence* from the Obſervation of the regular *courſe of natural Cauſes*; is as if a Man ſhould conclude from the *uniformity* of a large and beautiful Building, that it was not the work of Mens Hands, nor contrived by any Free Agent, becauſe the Stones and the Timber were laid *uniformly and regularly*, in the moſt conſtant, natural, and proper Order.

4thly, The *Laſt* doctrinal Obſervation I ſhall draw from the Text, is; that ſince the whole Courſe of Nature in the ordinary method of Cauſes and Effects, and all thoſe unexpected Turns of Things which Men vulgarly call Chance and Accident, are entirely in the Hand of God, and under the continual direction of His Providence; it follows evidently, (and 'tis a Doctrine worthy the moſt ſerious conſideration of all wicked Men,) that God can, whenever he pleaſes, even *without* a Miracle, puniſh the diſobedient; And no Swiftneſs, no Strength, no Wiſdom, no Artifice, ſhall in any manner avail, or inable them to eſcape the Vengeance, which even *Natural Cauſes* only, by the direction of Him from whom they receive their Nature, bring upon Offenders. He can puniſh by Fires and Famine, by Plagues and Peſtilences, by Storms and Earthquakes, by domeſtick Commotions or by foreign Enemies. He can, as *Moſes* elegantly expreſſes it, make the *Heavens over mens Heads Braſs*, and *the Earth under their Feet Iron*, or the very *Beaſts of the Field to riſe up againſt them*: Or, as 'tis in the Book of *Wiſdom*; ch. v. 22, 23, 20; he can cauſe that *a mighty Wind ſhall ſtand up againſt them*, or *the Waters of the Sea ſhall rage againſt them*, and *the* World *ſhall fight for him againſt the unwiſe*. He can, by means of the leaſt *Accident*, as we ignorantly ſtile it, diſcomfit the greateſt Armies before a Few of their Enemies: As 2 *Chr.* xxiv. 24; *The Syrians came with a ſmall company of men, and the Lord delivered a very great Hoſt* (of the Iſraelites) *into their hand; becauſe they had forſaken the Lord God of their Fathers.* Neither ſhall any Swiftneſs deliver them from the Purſuer: *Iſ.* xxx. 16. *Ye ſaid, We will flee upon Horſes; therefore ſhall ye flee: And we will ride upon the Swift; therefore ſhall they that purſue you, be ſwift: One thouſand ſhall flee at the rebuke of One; at the rebuke of five ſhall ye flee; 'till ye be left as a Beacon upon the top of a Mountain, and as an Enſign on a Hill.* Nay, *without* any *viſible* external cauſe at all, to which ſuch an Effect can be aſcribed; Providence can ſecretly blaſt, and inſenſibly cauſe to moulder away, the greateſt Power, Riches, or other worldly Advantages whatſoever: *Pſ.* xxxix. 11; *When thou with Rebukes doſt chaſten Man for Sin, thou makeſt his Beauty to conſume away, like as a Moth fretting a garment; every man therefore is but Vanity.* And 'tis the exceeding Stupidity of profane Men, not to be moved hereby to *repent*, and *give*

glory

glory to the God of Heaven, who *hath Power over theſe Plagues*, Rev. xvi. 9. SERM. XIII.
The Meaning of this whole Obſervation is, not that theſe Judgements are always certain Signs of God's diſpleaſure againſt all the particular perſons upon whom they at any time fall; (for This our Saviour has expreſsly warned us againſt, as a moſt uncharitable Concluſion: But whether they be Puniſhments for Sin, (as they generally, though not always, are;) or whether they be only Trials of Mens Virtue, (as they ſometimes are deſigned to be;) or whether they be Means of weaning them from this tranſitory and uncertain World: or whatever other Ends Providence brings about thereby; ſtill they are always Effects of the ſame All-wiſe divine Providence; which ought to be acknowledged and ſubmitted to as ſuch, and whoſe Deſigns no Power or Wiſdom of frail and vain men can oppoſe or prevent.

The *Practical Inferences*, ariſing naturally from what has been ſaid, are as follows.

1*ſt*, If theſe things be ſo; then let the greateſt and moſt powerful of wicked men conſider, that they have nothing in This World either to boaſt of, or to rely upon. *Jer.* ix. 23; *Let not the wiſe man glory in his Wiſdom, let not the rich man glory in his Riches, neither let the mighty man glory in his might:* For all theſe Advantages are frequently defeated, and *Time and Chance happeneth to them All. I will not truſt in my Bow*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *neither ſhall my Sword ſave me; But it is* Thou *that ſaveſt us from our Enemies*, Pſ. xliv. 6. Wiſe therefore was the Anſwer of the King of *Iſrael*, to an inſulting meſſage from the King of *Syria*, 1 *Kings* xx. 11; *Tell him, Let not him that girdeth on his harneſs, boaſt himſelf, as he that putteth it off.* The Event ſhowed, that his Admonition was reaſonable; And the *Syrian's* Pride, was but the immediate fore-runner of his Deſtruction. For the ſame purpoſe, it is recorded of *Nebuchadnezzar* King of *Babylon*, that when *his Greatneſs was grown and reached unto Heaven, and his Dominion to the End of the Earth*, Dan. iv. 22; it was ſaid unto him, ver. 25; *They ſhall drive thee from Men, and thy dwelling ſhall be with the Beaſts of the Field, and they ſhall make thee to eat graſs as Oxen, and they ſhall wet thee with the Dew of Heaven,*——('tis the deſcription of a very ſevere and mortifying Diſtemper of Mind;) *'till thou know that the moſt High ruleth in the Kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomſoever he will.* This is the plain Deſign of Providence, in ſuch extraordinary Events; to bring men to an Acknowledgment, of *Him* on whom they depend; to bring them to a right Knowledge, of *God* and of *themſelves*: *That he may with-draw Man from his Purpoſe*, Job. xxxiii. 17, *and hide Pride from Man.* Well (indeed) may *Pride* be ſaid to be hid from Men, when not only the Succeſs of their greateſt Advantages, but even their very *Life* itſelf, is uncertain every moment. *Boaſt not thyſelf of to morrow*, Prov. xxvii. 1, *for thou knoweſt not what a day*, what an Hour, *may bring forth.* For *as the Fiſhes that are taken in an evil Net, and as the Birds that are caught in the Snare; ſo are the Sons of Men ſnared in an evil time, when it falleth ſuddenly upon them*; Eccles. ix. 12. The rich man in the Goſpel, reſolved to pull down his barns, and build bigger; and then it was ſaid unto him, *Thou Fool, this night ſhall thy Soul be required of thee.* In the Days of *Noah*; Men *eat and drank, they married and were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entred into the Ark*: *And* then *the Flood came and deſtroyed them All.* Likewiſe *in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they ſold, they planted, they builded*: *But the ſame day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimſtone from Heaven, and deſtroyed them All.* And ſo alſo ſhall it finally be *in the Great Day, when the Son of Man is revealed*; Luke xvii. 30.

2*dly*, If nothing happens in the World, without the divine Providence; then good Men have a ſufficient Ground of Truſt and Reliance upon God, at all times and under All Dangers. Not, that God will *always* deliver them, or cauſe them to proſper in the preſent World; For he often ſees it better, to determine otherwiſe: But they may rely with aſſurance, that nothing can befal them but what *He* judges fit; ſeeing all the Powers of Nature and of ſecond Cauſes, are nothing but Inſtruments in *His* hand, and under *His* direction.

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Truſt therefore *in the Lord, with all thine heart,*——and *in all thy ways acknowledge Him*; Prov. iii. 5. He can *ſave*, whenever he pleaſes; 2 *Chr.* xiv, 9, 11: and xvi. 8, 9. 1 *Sam.* xiv. 6; with *many*, or *Few*; cauſing all the Accidents, which *we* call *Time and Chance*, to *fulfil his Word*; Pſ. cxlviii. 8; and execute his Pleaſure: So that, if *He* thinks *fit*, even *five ſhall* be able to *chaſe an hundred, and an hundred ſhall put ten thouſand to flight*; Levit. xxvi. 8; *and* Deut. xxxii. 30.

3dly and *Laſtly*; From This Notion of Providence, may be given a plain and direct Anſwer to that Queſtion of the profane Fataliſt; *Job* xxi. 15; *What is the Almighty, that we ſhould ſerve him? and what Profit ſhould we have, if we pray unto him?* Indeed, if the Courſe of Nature, and thoſe things which we call *ſecond Cauſes*, were independent upon Providence; there *would* be good Reaſon to ask, what Benefit could there be either in *Prayer* or *Thankſgiving*. But if, as has been ſhown, Nature is nothing, and ſecond cauſes are nothing, but mere Inſtruments; then it is very plain, that Prayer and Thankſgiving are as much due to God for whatever is brought about by *Natural* cauſes as if he had done the Thing by any *Other Inſtruments* inſtead of *Theſe*, even by the moſt miraculous ones; Which, in That caſe, being no leſs conſtant, would have been no more miraculous than *Theſe*.

SERMON

SERMON XIV.

The Practice of Wickedneſs generally attended with great Evil.

[*An Inauguration-Sermon.*]

PROV. xiii. 21.

Evil purſueth Sinners; but to the Righteous, Good ſhall be repaid.

THE Parable which our Saviour ſpake concerning the Perverſeneſs of the *Jews*, in finding fault equally on *Both* ſides; both with *John Baptiſt*'s more *ſevere*, and with our Lord's own more *free* manner of Converſation in the world; may be applied generally to almoſt *all* the Objections, which wicked and profane Men *at any time* make againſt Religion. No *Reaſon*, No *Argument*, No *Method of Proceeding* whatſoever, will ſatisfy prejudiced and corrupt Minds. *John the Baptiſt came, neither eating nor drinking*; Matt. xi. 18. That is, *He*, when he was ſent to preach, came ſolitary in the Wilderneſs, with great Auſtereneſs and Severity of Life, with Faſting and Abſtinence, with Mortification and Self-denial; and they ſaid, he is Mad, and hath a Devil. On the contrary, *Chriſt* came to preach *without* this Auſterity, in a more free way of Converſation; and they called him a looſe Perſon, a Glutton, and a Wine-Drinker, and a Companion of the worſt of Men. Upon This their Perverſeneſs, our Lord compares thoſe

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Jews to *froward and peeviſh children*, who do every thing contrary to what their Companions deſire and expect: Ver. 17; *We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced*; *we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented*: When *others* play and are cheerful, *they* will be ſullen and ill-humoured; when *others* be ſorrowful, *they* will laugh and mock. But, after the Perverſeneſs of Men has ſaid and done all that it can; *Wiſdom*, ſays our Lord, *is juſtified of all her children*; Wiſdom will ſtill vindicate it ſelf, and appear to be Wiſdom, in whomſoever it be found, and in what manner ſoever it be exerciſed.

The Caſe is the *Same* in almoſt *all other* Inſtances, wherein prejudiced and corrupt minds are continually ſeeking Objections againſt Religion; Objections, *contrary to* and *inconſiſtent with* each other. Does Providence at any time beſtow *remarkable Bleſſings*, upon virtuous and good Men? Immediately from hence an Argument is drawn againſt Virtue, as if it loſt the Nature of Virtue, and became *mercenary*, by having *reſpect unto the recompence of Reward*. Moſt elegantly is *This Objection* ſet forth, in the *firſt chapter* of the book of *Job*; where *Satan* is repreſented as arguing before the Lord; *ver.* 9; *Doth Job fear God for nought? Haſt not thou made an hedge about him, and about his Houſe, and about all that he hath on every ſide? Thou haſt bleſſed the work of his hands, and his ſubſtance is increaſed in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curſe thee to thy face.*

On the *contrary*; Does Providence *forbear to interpoſe* in the preſent time, and reſerve Judgment to the day of Retribution? *Then* the Argument is *turned*; and the Speech of the Scoffers is, *Where is the Promiſe of his Coming? For ſince the Fathers fell aſleep, all things continue as they were from the Beginning of the Creation*; 2 Pet. iii. 4: *Then* they ſay, *It is vain to ſerve God*; *and what Profit is it, that we have kept his Ordinance?* Mal. iii. 14: *Then* they ask, *What is the Almighty, that we ſhould ſerve him? and what Profit ſhould we have, if we pray unto him?* Job xxi. 15.

The *Anſwer* to *Both*, is eaſy and obvious. God's *Forbearance* at any Time to interpoſe in the *preſent State* on the behalf of Virtue, is no Argument at all againſt the *Benefit* and *Advantage* of Serving him; becauſe he is able to make abundant Recompence in the *Life to come*: Upon which account, excellent is the Advice of *Solomon*, Prov. xxiii. 17; *Let not thine heart envy Sinners, but be thou in the Fear of the Lord all the day long: For ſurely there is an end*, (or, as we render it in the margin, *ſurely there is a Reward*,) *and thine expectation ſhall not be cut off.* And on the *other* hand, the *Rewards and Puniſhments* which *God* diſtributes either in the *preſent* or in a *future* State, do not at all alter the Nature of Virtue, or make it in Any degree become *mercenary*: Becauſe a Man's Regard to his *own* Intereſt and Advantage is *Then* only Faulty, when it is a Temptation to him to do any thing that is in its own nature Evil; not when it is in conjunction with the univerſal Right and Reaſon of things, and the Happineſs of God's whole Creation.

My Deſign at This Time from the words of the Text, is to repreſent and inculcate this great Truth, that the *Practice of Righteouſneſs* is mens *true Intereſt*, even in the *preſent* Life; and that *Wickedneſs* is generally attended with *Great Miſery*, even *Here* as well as *Hereafter*. *Evil purſueth Sinners*; *but to the Righteous, Good ſhall be repayed.*

Before I enter upon the particular explication of which Doctrine, there is One thing needful to be premiſed; that the whole of what is to be ſaid upon This Subject, muſt always be underſtood with an *exception* to the Caſe of *Perſecution* for Truth and Righteouſneſs ſake. For *all moral* and *univerſal Propoſitions* of this kind, expreſſing the *general* Tendency of things in their natural Courſe, and the ordinary eſtabliſhed Diſpoſitions of Divine Providence; are ſufficiently verified, if they take place in all Caſes where the *natural Order* of things is permitted to produce its *proper* Effect. When the Nature of Things is perverted or over-ruled by any extraordinary Violence, an Exception muſt be made; without any detriment to the Truth of the general Propoſition. And of This ſort is the Caſe of *Perſecution* for Religion. *Virtue*, in the *Nature of things*,

things, and according to the *general Promiſe and Appointment of God*, is the Foundation and Cauſe of true Happineſs among men. Yet the Perverſeneſs of a wicked and corrupt World, *may poſſibly* load it, upon ſome particular Occaſions, with the greateſt Temporal Calamities; and inflict the ſevereſt Puniſhments in their power, upon that which really deſerves the Higheſt Commendation and Reward. In *This* caſe, the Beſt of men, *if in This life only* they *had hope*, might *of All men* become *the moſt miſerable*. But then, for *this very Reaſon*. God has promiſed them a Recompence in a *Future State*; and herein they may rejoyce, even *not accepting Deliverance, that they may obtain a better Reſurrection*. Setting aſide *This caſe* therefore, which is of *peculiar* conſideration; the Propoſition I laid down, may evidently be ſhown to be a *General* Truth, that the *Practice of Righteouſneſs* is men's True Intereſt, even in the *preſent* Life; and that *Wickedneſs* is generally attended with *Great Miſery*, even *Here* as well as *Hereafter*. *Evil purſueth Sinners; but to the Righteous, Good ſhall be repaid.*

I. In the *Firſt* place: If we conſider Mankind *in general*, in the largeſt and moſt extenſive View, under the notion of that One Univerſal Community, wherein St. *Paul* conſidered them, when he told the *Athenians*, Acts xvii. 26; *God has made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the Face of the Earth*: Under *This* View, I ſay, it is very evident, that the *Only thing* which diſtinguiſhes *Men* from the *Wild Beaſts of the Foreſt*, that devour each other according to their Strength, and have no Rights nor Property in any thing; The *only thing* which diſtinguiſhes *Men* from theſe *Wild Beaſts*, with regard to any True *Happineſs of Life*; is *Religion*, or a *Senſe of juſt and Right*, and of the Difference of *Moral* Good and Evil. For Reaſon, as to *That* part of it which denotes *Sagacity* only, or *Underſtanding*, ſeparate from all Regard to *Moral* Obligation; does only enable men, if they be wicked, *more effectually*, and with *greater Skill*, to *torment* and *deſtroy* each other; and to have a *deeper* and *more affecting* and more *laſting* Senſe of the *Miſeries* they endure, than *irrational* Creatures are by their Nature capable of. It is *Reaſon*, in that *Other* reſpect alone, as it implies a ſenſe of *Moral* Obligation, (on which *Religion* is founded;) it is *This alone*, on which depends all *poſſibility* of *Happineſs* in Humane Life; And to the *degree of Influence* which *This* has in the world, the Happineſs Mankind enjoys above the *Wild Beaſts of the Field*, is always exactly *proportionate*. Did not therefore the Paſſions, the Ambition, the Covetouſneſs, and other the like unnatural Vices of corrupt Minds, hinder this *Reaſon* and *Moral Underſtanding*, which is the peculiar Excellency and Glory of Mankind, from producing its natural and proper Effect in the world; the Earth would even in this *preſent* time, bating *Mortality* only, be that Scene of univerſal Happineſs, which God hath promiſed ſhall take place *hereafter* in the *New Heavens and New Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteouſneſs*. In the mean time, from this *abſtract* View of the *general* Nature of Things and of the Conſequences which *would be* the natural Reſult of *univerſal Righteouſneſs*; it is apparent enough, to *what* Originals, to *what* Cauſes and Principles, the *various degrees and proportions* of *Happineſs and Miſery*, which are found in the preſent mixt and confuſed ſtate of things, are juſtly to be aſcribed.

II. *Secondly*, If we conſider Mankind in a ſomewhat *leſs general View*; not in the univerſal abſtract Notion, but in their more reſtrained political Capacity, as formed into particular diſtinct *Nations* and *Governments*: Under *This View* alſo it is no leſs evident, that the only poſſible Foundation of true and laſting Happineſs to any *Nation* or *People*, as ſuch; is the Practice of *Righteouſneſs* and *True Virtue*. I inſiſt not at preſent, in This Argument, upon the extraordinary *Bleſſings* which the *Providence of God* thinks fit at any time to pour down in a peculiar manner upon a Religious Nation; or the *Judgments* wherewith he ſometimes puniſhes a degenerate people, *turning a fruitful Land into Barrenneſs, for the Wickedneſs of them that dwell therein*: But what I obſerve, is, that in the *natural Tendency*, in the *regular and proper Conſequences of men's own Behaviour*; *Righteouſneſs* (as *Solomon* expreſſes it) *exalteth a Nation, but Sin is a Reproach to any people*. In proportion as *Juſtice*, and *Order*, and *Truth*,

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and *Fidelity* prevail; creating mutual Love and Good-will, mutual Truſt and Confidence among men; which are the great Bands of Peace and Unity: In the *ſame* proportion is the *Happineſs* of the Society, and the Welfare of the Publick evidently ſecured.

When *Magiſtrates* rule in the Fear of God; looking upon themſelves as *ſent by Him for the Puniſhment of Evil doers, and for the Praiſe of them that do well*, making uſe of all the Influence and Authority they are inveſted with, to promote Virtue, Righteouſneſs, and Good Manners among men: When *Laws* are *made* with one continued View to the Good of the Publick; and *executed* with Diligence, Equity, and Fidelity: When perſons in *all the relative* ſtations of Life, perform faithfully and conſcientiouſly the Duty of the reſpective Stations wherein they are placed: When Bargains are regularly *contracted* upon Terms of *equitable* conſideration, and *executed* with *Juſtice* and punctual *Veracity*: When in *every Exigence* of *common Life*, mutual *Truſt and Confidence*, univerſal *Benevolence and Good-will*, are both the *Spring* or *Motive*, and the *Rule* or *Meaſure* of Action: There is no one ſo abſurd as not to ſee, that there hence ariſes, in *neceſſary*, in *evident*, in *immediate* conſequence, an *Image* of Publick Happineſs, the moſt *Lovely* that the Mind of Man can poſſibly be preſented with. An *Image* indeed *only*, which the *Imagination* may contemplate; but which, in this preſent corrupt world, can never poſſibly have a *Reality* to anſwer it. Yet it ſhows abundantly the *Truth* of the Propoſition I was to prove: Becauſe whatever is, in its *complete Idea*, of *perfect* Excellency; is by neceſſary conſequence, in *every degree* of its *Reality*, of *proportionably* good Effects. *So far* therefore as Juſtice and Charity, and univerſal Virtue, prevails and is practiſed in Any Nation or Community; *ſo far* will That Community find thoſe good Effects, which, were men's *Virtue perfect*, would be *perfect Felicity*. On the contrary: *So far* as Injuſtice, Tyranny, Fraud, Luxury, and other Vices, are encouraged in any Society of men; *ſo far* will That Society feel certain degrees of thoſe pernicious Effects, which, where Vice and Corruption ariſe univerſally to their higheſt Pitch, do unavoidably end in Total Deſtruction. The *only* poſſible *Deluſion* therefore, by which men are continually tempted into unrighteous Practices, notwithſtanding the *evident* perniciouſneſs of ſuch Practice in its moſt naturally conſequent Effects; is their fondly and unreaſonably imagining, that, what is undeniably *ruinous* to the *Whole*, may yet to *Themſelves in particular* be *Advantagious*. And This I call a *Deluſion*; not only upon account of the *Future Judgment*, which falls not within the compaſs of my preſent Argument; but it is a *mere Deluſion*, generally ſpeaking, with reſpect to the real and ſubſtantial Advantages even of this *preſent* Life. For, beſides that whatever is in its natural conſequence pernicious to the *Publick*, muſt probably *by that very means*, in the *courſe of things*, bring a due Puniſhment upon the *particular Offenders* themſelves; It is moreover ſtill further true, without taking in *any* conſideration of the Publick *at all*; it is, I ſay, ſtill further true in the

III. *Third* place, That if we conſider men *ſingly*, every one in his mere *private perſonal capacity*; ſtill the only poſſible Foundation of real and laſting Happineſs to a man even in *That View*, (always excepting, as I before ſaid, the caſe of Perſecution,) is the Practice of Righteouſneſs, Charity, Temperance, and univerſal Virtue. *Evil purſueth Sinners; but to the Righteous, Good ſhall be repaid.* The Truth of the Propoſition, will moſt clearly appear in the *Particulars*.

The *Firſt Ground* and moſt neceſſary Ingredient of *every* Enjoyment in Life, and *without which* there can be no Reliſh of any *other* Enjoyment whatſoever, is *Health*. Now though God *has* indeed made *all* men mortal; and the *Beſt* are ſubject to *Infirmities and Diſeaſes*, and the moſt *vicious* ſeem *ſometimes* almoſt *entirely* to *eſcape* the natural conſequences of their Vices; yet *particular Inſtances*, alter not the *general Truth* of Things; and *Virtue*, upon the *whole*, has undeniably the *Advantage* in this *firſt foundation* of Temporal Happineſs. For *Sobriety and Temperance* certainly cauſe *no* Diſtempers, and *Debauchery* is notoriouſly

ouſly the Cauſe of *Many*. With all juſtneſs therefore, are thoſe general Declarations of Wiſdom in Scripture: *My Son, forget not my Law, but let thy Heart keep my Commandments; For Length of days and long Life, ſhall they add to thee. Fear the Lord, and depart from Evil; it ſhall be Health to thy Navel, and Marrow to thy Bones. Length of days is in her right hand; ſhe is a Tree of Life, to them that lay hold upon her.* And on the contrary, concerning *Debauchery*; Prov. vii. 26: *She has caſt down many wounded, yea, many young men have been ſlain by her: Her houſe is the way to Hell,* (that is, to the Grave untimely,) *going down to the chambers of Death.* SERM. XIV. Prov. iii. 1. ver. 7. 16. 18.

The caſe is the very ſame likewiſe, with regard to the *External* Advantages of Life; ſuch as are *Riches*, *Honour*, *Reputation*, and the like. It cannot indeed be denied, but that by *Oppreſſion* and *Violence*, by *Unrighteouſneſs* and *Corruption*, by *Deceit* and *Fraud*, immenſe *Riches* have been ſometimes obtained, and ſeemingly a very great Superiority over the reſt of Mankind. But if it be impartially conſidered, *how* ſmall a number *in proportion* have ever *ſucceeded* in This manner; *how* many have been *defeated* and *blaſted* in the *Attempt*, before they could at all gain their Point; how *little*, how *uncertain*, how *vexatious*, how *interrupted* the *Enjoyment* has been, of thoſe who have in This method had the greateſt and moſt remarkable Succeſs; and, after all, how frequently, and in how ſhort a time, the higheſt Proſperity of This kind has terminated in the heavieſt Ruin; it will undeniably appear, that the *moderate proportion* of the good things of life, *gained* uſually by Frugality, Induſtry, Honeſty, and Integrity; *enjoyed* with Temperance, Contentment, and Security; and, through the Bleſſing of God, *generally*, (or at leaſt *much more often* than the Wages of Unrighteouſneſs,) *continuing permanent*; are really and truly, in a right Computation and Eſtimate, even according to this *preſent World*, the moſt Subſtantial Riches. So that it is with great Truth, that *Solomon* affirms concerning *Virtue and Integrity* under the Name of *Wiſdom*, Prov. iii. 14; *The Merchandiſe of it is better than the Merchandiſe of Silver, and the Gain thereof than fine Gold: She is more precious than Rubies; and all the things thou canſt deſire, are not to be compared to her: Length of days are in her right hand, and in her left hand Riches and Honour.* Nor is it without particular Reaſon, that he here mentions *Honour* diſtinctly, as well as *Riches*. For though, with regard to *Honour alſo* as well as Riches, it *is* indeed undeniably *true*, that by *unrighteous, fraudulent, and corrupt* Practices, the *Higheſt Honours and Dignities in the World* have *Sometimes* been attained to; yet whoever impartially conſiders upon the whole, the *Precipices* upon which unrighteous Grandeur ſtands; and compares it with that valuable and *Laſting Eſteem* in the Eyes of the Beſt and Wiſeſt part of Mankind, which is built upon the ſolid Foundation of Real and True Worth; will find, that it is in moſt perfect agreement with the *Nature and Reaſon of Things*, that the *Scripture* declares that *the Righteous is more excellent than his Neighbour*; that *the Righteous ſhall be had in everlaſting Remembrance*; that *the Memory of the Juſt is Bleſſed, but the Name of the Wicked ſhall rot*; that the Wicked *are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low; they are taken out of the way,——and cut off as the Tops of the Ears of Corn*; Job xxiv. 24. And therefore the Advice of *Solomon* is entirely well-grounded; *Prov.* iii. 3: *Let not Mercy and Truth forſake thee; bind them about thy Neck, write them upon the Table of thine Heart; So ſhalt thou find Favour and Good Underſtanding, in the ſight of God and Man.* Prov. xii. 26. Pſ. cxii. 6. Prov. x. 7.

There is *One Particular* ſtill behind, which contributes *more* to any man's Happineſs even in this *preſent* Life, than *all* either *Bodily Enjoyments*, or *External Affluence of Wealth and Honours*; And That is, *Inward Peace and Satisfaction in his Own Mind.* Now in *This* Particular, there is *no Pretence* of Compariſon, between the Righteous and the Wicked. *Here*, Virtue triumphs abſolutely without Controul; and has *no Competitor*, to ſhare or to conteſt with it the Enjoyment of the moſt valuable and moſt laſting Pleaſures of Life. The Caſe of *Perſecution* itſelf, needs not *here* to be excepted. Nay, even the *Falſe* Coin, the very *Deluſion*, the *imaginary* Satisfaction of the *mereſt Enthuſiaſm*, has

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in This reſpect the Advantage over the *greateſt Pleaſures of Unrighteouſneſs*. How much *more*, when the *Peace and Satisfaction of Mind* is built upon the moſt *ſolid Foundation*, upon the moſt *Rational and Real Grounds!* when it is founded upon a Senſe, of having done what, in *itſelf* abſolutely, in the *Nature* and *Reaſon* of Things, is *juſt and fit and right*! what, by *proper and natural conſequence*, tends to the *Benefit of Mankind*, to the *Happineſs of the whole Creation!* what renders a man as certainly *acceptable* and *well-pleaſing* unto *God*, as it is certain the World is at all governed by ſuch a *Wiſe*, *Juſt*, and *Good Being!* and what conſequently, in the laſt place, gives a man a *reaſonable and well-grounded* Expectation of being *happy hereafter*, when the Enjoyments of *This World* ſhall be no more! This is indeed, in the Senſe of our Saviour's Parable, a *Pearl* of *great Price*; juſtly and highly magnified in numerous Expreſſions of Scripture. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man, is peace*; Pſ. xxxvii. 38. *Light is ſown for the Righteous, and joyful gladneſs for them that are upright in heart*, xcvii. 11. *Great Peace have they that Love thy Law, and nothing ſhall offend them*, cxix. 165. *Her ways are ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are Peace*, Prov. iii. 17. *The work of Righteouſneſs is Peace, and the effect of Righteouſneſs, Quietneſs and Aſſurance for ever*, Iſ. xxxii. 17. *The wicked is driven away in his Wickedneſs, but the Righteous hath Hope in his Death*, Prov. xiv. 32. It is true; ſometimes *very pious* and *good* Perſons, have been extremely afflicted with Trouble of Mind: But *This Trouble* has never been the *Effect* of *Virtue*; and can with no more Juſtice be put to the Account of it, than weeds which ſpring up among the choiceſt Corn, can be ſaid to proceed from the good Seed which was ſown. *This Trouble* is always owing, either to ſome miſtaken Notion of the Perfections of God, to ſome ill-grounded Fear, to ſome implanted Prejudice of Superſtition, or to a real Senſe of ſome paſt Sins; and therefore never *ariſes from*, but is only to be *cured by*, a *right underſtanding* of the *Nature and Effects* of True *Virtue*. In like manner abandoned and debauched Perſons, on the *other* ſide, ſeem indeed ſometimes for a Seaſon, to have *full Eaſe* and Satisfaction in their Folly: But *This Eaſe*, never is the *Acquieſcence of Reaſon*: It is the *Stupidity* only of a *Lethargy* or *Mortification*: Not at all a *Freedom* from the *Diſeaſe*, but merely a *Senſeleſneſs* of the *preſent Deſtruction*. Sooner or later, *Reaſon will* be heard; and *Truth will* force itſelf upon them. *For, what is the Hope of the Hypocrite, when God taketh away his Soul?* Job xxvii. 8. I ſpeak not here of the *Puniſhments* in a *future* State, but of the *Juſt Apprehenſions* which attend Wickedneſs in the *preſent*. *The Spirit of a man will ſuſtain his infirmity, but a wounded Spirit who can bear?* Prov. xviii. 14. And *Iſ.* lvii. 20; *The Wicked are like the troubled Sea, when it cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt up mire and dirt: There is no Peace, ſaith my God, to the Wicked.*

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SERMON XV.

The Character of oppreſſive Power in Religion.

[*Preached on the 5th of November.*]

DAN. vii. 23.

Which ſhall be diverſe from all Kingdoms, and ſhall devour the whole Earth, and ſhall tread it down, and break it in pieces.

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MY deſign in This Place, is not to enter into a *particular* Interpretation of the Prophetick Language; much leſs to propoſe any uncertain Conjectures, concerning the Times and the *Seaſons* which the Almighty has put in his own Power; but to conſider only a *general Character*, which runs through a *long Series* of Prophecy both in the Old Teſtament and in the New, of a certain *great Power*, formidable and laſting, of large *Extent* and of long *Duration*, and, in its *Nature* and *Kind*, different from all *Other* Powers and Kingdoms in the World. The *Character* is ſuch, as ſhows plainly one principal *End* and *Deſign* of the Prophecy to be This; to give men repeated Warnings to take great Heed, that they neither fall (if poſſible) under the tyrannical Oppreſſion of this dreadful Power, nor Themſelves have any Share in exerciſing it over Others.

The *Character* or *Deſcription* given by the *Prophet*, of this *ſingular* and *extraordinary* Power, is in the following Words. He ſhall *make War with the Saints, and prevail againſt them*: *And he ſhall ſpeak great Words againſt the moſt High, and ſhall wear out the Saints of the moſt High, and think to change Times and Laws*; *and they ſhall be given into his hand* for a long Seaſon, even till &c.

ch. vii. 21. ver. 25. 26. 27. ch. xi. 36.

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till *the Judgment ſhall ſit.* He *ſhall exalt himſelf, and magnify himſelf above every God, and ſhall ſpeak marvellous things againſt the God of gods:*——*Neither ſhall he regard the God of his Fathers,*——*for he ſhall magnify himſelf above All;*——*and ſhall divide the Land for Gain.*

From this *deſcription* given by the Prophet *Daniel*, is plainly taken the *character* St. *Paul* ſets forth, of a *Man of Sin to be revealed, the Son of Perdition: Who oppoſeth and exalteth himſelf above all that is called God, or that is worſhipped: So that He, as God, ſitteth in the Temple of God, ſhewing himſelf that he is God:*——*Whoſe Coming is after the working of Satan, with all Power, and Signs, and Lying Wonders, and with all Deceivableneſs of Unrighteouſneſs*: Teaching men to *give heed to ſeducing Spirits, and doctrines of* * *Devils:*—— *Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abſtain from Meats, which God hath created to be received with thankſgiving, of them which believe, and know the Truth.*

2 Theſs ii. 3. &c.

1 Tim. iv. 1, 3.

Δαιμονίων, * *Souls departed,* Saints.

The ſame character is likewiſe evidently intended by St. *John*, when he propheſies of a *wild Beaſt*, or *Tyrannical Power*, to whom was given *Great Authority*, and *a Mouth ſpeaking Great things, and Blaſphemies*: *And he opened his Mouth in Blaſphemy againſt God: And it was given unto him to make War with the Saints, and to overcome them: And Power was given him over all Kindreds and Tongues and Nations; And all that dwell upon the Earth ſhall worſhip him.*——*And he*——*doth great Wonders,*—*and Deceiveth them that dwell on the Earth, by the Means of thoſe Miracles that he had Power to do.* And the *Kings* of the Earth *have one Mind; and ſhall give their Power and Strength unto the Beaſt;*——*even Peoples and Multitudes and Nations and Tongues.*—*For God hath put in their Hearts* [in the Hearts of the Kings of the Earth] *to fulfil his Will, and to agree, and give their Kingdom unto the Beaſt, until the Words of God ſhall be fulfilled.* The Name of the Perſon, in whoſe hands the *Reins* or *Principal Direction of the Exerciſe* of this Power is lodged, is *Myſtery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots, and Abominations of the Earth: With whom the Kings of the Earth have committed Fornication*, (that is, have been led into idolatrous Practices,) *and the Inhabiters of the Earth have been made drunk with the Wine of her Fornication:* And She herſelf is *drunken with the Blood of the Saints, and with the Blood of the Martyrs of Jeſus*: And *by her Sorceries* (that is, artificial Methods of making men *Religious* without true Virtue,) *by her Sorceries are all Nations deceived: And in Her is found the Blood of Prophets, and of Saints, and of All that are ſlain upon the Earth.* And This Perſon, (the *political* Perſon,) to whom theſe Titles and Characters belong, is, *That Great City*, Rev. xvii. 18. ſtanding *upon ſeven Mountains*, ver. 9, *which Reigneth over the Kings of the Earth.*

Rev. xiii. 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, ch. xvii. 13, 15, 17, ver. 3, 7. ver. 5. ver. 2. ver. 6. ch. xviii. 23, 24.

It is hardly poſſible for any one careſully to read theſe Texts, as they lie in Scripture; but he muſt immediately apprehend, if he has any hiſtorical Knowledge of the State of the World for many paſt Ages, that This Deſcription was either *intended* to be a prediction of That tyrannical Power, which *Popery* in its moſt flouriſhing times eſtabliſhed in the World; or at leaſt that it is as exact and complete a Picture of it, as could poſſibly have been drawn even *after* the Event. *Oppreſſive Powers* there *have been Many* in the World, by the righteous Judgment of God, both *Great* and *Laſting:* But *This* has been, after a moſt remarkable and wonderful manner, in its whole *Nature and Kind, different* from all *Other Powers*, wherewith men ever were oppreſſed. According to the deſcription given in my Text: It *ſhall be diverſe from all Kingdoms, and ſhall devour the Whole Earth, and ſhall tread it down, and break it in pieces.*

The *Peculiarities* wherein This Great Oppreſſive Power *differs* from all other Tyrannies which have been ſet up among men; and is *diverſe from all Kingdoms*, which have at any time *devoured the whole Earth*; are principally Theſe which follow.

1. It is a *Religious* Tyranny; a Power, ſitting in the Seat and Temple of *God. Other* Tyrannies, founded *originally* in *Force*, and in the *Power* of the *Sword*; have indeed frequently made uſe of Pretences of *Religion*, to ſupport themſelves *occaſionally*; and no leſs frequently *laid aſide* thoſe Pretences again, when

when they had no further occaſion for them. But *This* is a Tyranny founded *originally* upon *mere* matters of *Religion*; and carried on through its *whole* Progreſs, to the utmoſt length of an univerſal arbitrary Dominion, under the Name and Title ſtill of a *merely Spiritual* Authority. The Church of *Rome* claims to be itſelf the *whole*, the *univerſal* Church of God; and to be inveſted with a *Power*, which indeed the *real univerſal* Church has *no* pretence to, even a Plenitude of *Divine Power*. By virtue of this Power, they have taken upon themſelves to *change Laws and Times*; to eſtabliſh what new *Doctrines* and *Practices* they pleaſed, under the name of Religion; *forbidding to marry, and commanding to abſtain from Meats, which God hath created to be received with Thankſgiving*. Deſtroying Men's plain and natural Notions of *God*, and of his *Worſhip*; and thereby undermining and making unintelligible the very *Foundation* of all Religion. Introducing *new*, *ſuperſtitious*, and *idolatrous Objects* of Worſhip; the *Elements* in the *Sacrament*; and the *Mother of Chriſt*, whom (by a *profane* and *blaſphemous* ambiguity) they affect to ſtile the *Mother of God*; and even *Images*, *Pictures*, and *Statues* repreſenting her. *Giving heed to ſeducing Spirits, and Doctrines of Dæmons*; Doctrines, concerning the *Spirits* of *Saints departed*; and of *Saints*, who were *no Saints*, but very *Wicked Men*; and of *Saints*, who *never lived*, nor had any *Being at all*, but in the imaginations of deluded Men: Invoking them, as *Mediators* and *authoritative Interceſſors*; as inveſted with *miraculous Powers*, to *protect Men*, *Cities* and *Nations*; and as having in the *Court of Heaven* a *corrupt Intereſt*, to *skreen* their Devotees, even the moſt *abandoned Sinners*, from the *Wrath of him that ſitteth upon the Throne*, from the Sentence *of the righteous Judge of the whole Earth*: To the utter Subverſion of all *real religion and virtue*, and turning into Ridicule the *eſſential and unalterable* Difference of *Good and Evil*, and the *Eternal Laws of God and Nature*; which are *more immoveable*, than the Foundations of Heaven and Earth. For, to *diſpenſe* with *Morality*, and to indulge Men in certain ſtated *Equivalents* of *Ceremony*, in the ſtead of *real Virtue* and *Amendment of Manners*; is a Power, which even *God himſelf* has never claimed; and the doing of which, would be, (as the Apoſtle expreſſes it) to *deny himſelf*: It would be a *changing* of his *unchangeable* Nature, and making himſelf to *be* what he *is not*. Yet He who ſtiles himſelf *The Vicar of Chriſt*, has often claimed to Himſelf *This* Power; and, in *ſome* Ages of the Church, has carried it ſo far, as even ſolemnly to *abſolve* Men from the Obligation of juſt and reaſonable Compacts, and thoſe too made and confirmed upon Oath; merely to ſet them at liberty to be guilty of the moſt unjuſt and violent Oppreſſions, conſiſtently with being very pious and religious Perſons. What is This, but *opening his Mouth in Blaſphemy againſt God, and ſpeaking Great Words againſt the moſt High?* That is: Not in the way of *profeſſing Atheiſm*, or openly *defying* the *Name* of *Religion*; but by turning *Religion itſelf* into *Superſtition* and *Wickedneſs*.

2 Tim. II. 13.

And in order the more effectually to ſupport this abſurd and extravagant Power; the Church of *Rome* has, by the Eſtabliſhment of its New Doctrines and Practices, *fenced* itſelf *in*, and excluded abſolutely out of Communion all Chriſtians who are not willing to *make void the Commandments of God through theſe Traditions of Men*. By which means, they have formed a violent *Schiſm*; ſeparating and dividing themſelves totally from all Chriſtians, who deſire to *hold faſt* That *Form of ſound words*, that Doctrine *which was once delivered unto the Saints* by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and which is *now* conveyed down to *us* in the Sacred Writings: And then they confidently reproach all thoſe with the name of *Schiſmaticks*, who dare not join with them in this their *Great Schiſm*. Which is exactly the ſame thing, as if, in a *Civil* Government, a private Corporation ſhould make *By-laws* contrary to the Laws of the Country; and then confidently caſt the reproachful name of Traitors upon all the reſt of their Fellow-Subjects, who are not willing to involve themſelves in the guilt of real Rebellion by ſubmitting to thoſe illegal By-laws.

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In conſequence of this *Great Separation*, by which the Church of *Rome* has thus *hedged* itſelf *in*, and formed itſelf into a *Sect*, excluſive of and deſtructive to all ſuch as deſire to obey *God rather than Men*; they have in all places, where-ever they have had Power, openly ſet themſelves to deſtroy and extirpate, by all the Methods of Violence and Cruelty, all who would not *fall down and worſhip* this *Image which they have ſet up*. They have *made War with the Saints*, and *prevailed againſt them*, and *worn them out*. They have, by Courts of *Inquiſition*, made it unſpeakably more penal, to differ from them in any point of Doctrine of mere humane Invention, than to have been guilty of the moſt enormous Vices and Immoralities, in breach of the Eternal Laws of God. And whereas in all *Civil Governments*, where-ever there are any Remains of *Humanity*, all Laws concerning Capital Crimes are ſo framed, as that it may be more poſſible for a *guilty* Perſon to *eſcape*, than that an *Innocent* one ſhould *ſuffer*; in *This* Kingdom, on the contrary, *diverſe from all Kingdoms*, the Principle is; that *Millions*, not only of *Innocent* Perſons, but even of the *Beſt* and moſt *Virtuous* Men, ought rather to be expoſed to the extremeſt miſery, and to Puniſhments cruel above the worſt of Maleſactors; than that any of *Their Doctrines*, however contrary to All *Senſe* and *Reaſon*, ſhould be permitted to be *examined* and *debated* whether they be true or no.

2 Another Inſtance, wherein This Great oppreſſive Power *differs* from other Tyrannies; is, that it has been raiſed and kept up, not by *Force* only, but by *Sorceries* and *Lying Wonders* peculiar to itſelf. By *Signs* and *Wonders* and Lying *Miracles*, which the Scripture calls the *deceivableneſs of unrighteouſneſs*; by *Theſe* have they impoſed upon the *ignorant* and *credulous*. By numberleſs artificial Methods of making Men very *Religious* without Any *Virtue*, which are what the Scripture calls *Sorceries*; by *Theſe* have they drawn away the *Superſtitious* and *Devout*. By eſtabliſhing a political Kingdom of Religion, *diffuſed* over many Nations, *independent* upon every Government, and yet at the ſame Time cloſely and ſtrongly *united* within itſelf, under the uniform direction of *One* foreign Power; by *This* have they gradually prevailed upon *the Kings of the Earth* to *have one mind*, and to *give* up *their Kingdom*, their *Power, and Strength, unto the Beaſt*, ——even *People and Multitudes and Nations and Tongues*. Which laſt Circumſtance, points out to us ſtill further, a

3. Third Inſtance, wherein this Great Oppreſſive Power *differs* from other Tyrannies: And *That* is, that it is a Tyranny ſet up over even *Remote* Princes, over *all Kindreds and Tongues and Nations*; a Tyranny *ruling over the Kings of the Earth*, ruling in Places where it never had the leaſt pretence of any *Civil Power* or *Authority* whatſoever. This is what the Scripture calls, *exalting himſelf above all that is called God*; above all *Magiſtracy*, *Authority*, or *Dominion*, that God ever inſtituted. Diſpoſing arbitrarily of Kingdoms: Abſolving Subjects from their *Allegiance*, from all obligation to obey the *Laws* of their Country: And chuſing Kings and People, even whole Nations to be maſſacred, by ſecret Plots or by open Violences.

This is the Deſcription and Character given in the *prophetick* Parts of the inſpired Writings, of a great and *potent* Apoſtacy, which was largely and very diſtinctly foretold ſhould happen in the latter Ages of the Church. And the *Particularities*, wherein this Tyranny was to be *diverſe from all Kingdoms* that ever *devoured the whole Earth*, are ſo *ſingular* and *remarkable*; that it is hardly poſſible for any Man to miſtake in judging, to *Whom* the Characters belong. What remains therefore, is to draw ſome *Obſervations* from what has been ſaid, proper upon the *preſent* Occaſion. And,

Firſt; When St. *John* ſaw this ſtrange tyrannical Power repreſented to him in Prophecy, whilſt as yet there was no ſuch Power in Being; When he ſaw it repreſented to him under the ſimilitude of a *Woman* of fornications, that is, in Scripture-language an idolatrous Church; riding upon *peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues*, and domineering over the *Kings* of the Earth; *When I ſaw her*, ſays he, I *wondered with great Admiration*,

2 Theſs. 11. 9. 10. Rev. xviii. 23.

Rev. xvii. 13. 15. 17.

Rev. xiii. 7.

2 John. 11. 4.

Rev. xvii. 15.

miration, Rev. xvii. 6. And even *after* the Event, whoſoever has *any Notion* what *Virtue* or *Religion* is, muſt *ſtill* of neceſſity *wonder with great Admiration*, how it was ever poſſible that the *Name of Religion* ſhould be ſo prodigiouſly abuſed. *Religion* is not an *arbitrary* or *imaginary* thing, but founded upon eternal *Truth* and *Right*, or it never can have any Foundation at all. *Religion* is the Practice of *Virtue*, proceeding from a regard to *God the Judge of All*, the all-ſeeing and unerring Judge. *Good and Evil* are neceſſarily, eſſentially, and unalterably what they are: And God neceſſarily ſees and judges them to be ſo. The *Worſhip of God*, and the univerſal *Love of our Neighbour*, are evidently the Perfection of Moral *Good*; and the contrary to theſe, the greateſt Moral *Evil*. Whatever *Forms* or *Ceremonies* therefore have at any time been inſtituted either of *God* or *Good Men*, they have always been entirely ſubſervient to theſe *Moral Duties*: For *Moral Duties*, are the *End* and laſt Aim of *All Religion*, of all Religion both *natural and revealed*. What then muſt be thought of a Religion, filled with *Opinions* contrary to the neceſſary *Truth* and *Nature* of things; over-run with *idolatrous Practices*, in the Worſhip of *God*; and ſupported by *Wars*, *Perſecutions*, *Maſſacres*; by open *Violence*, and ſecret *Plots*; oppoſite, in the moſt barbarous and cruel manner, to the whole Spirit of that great Duty of *Love and Charity* towards *Men*! *Ye ſhall know them by their Fruits*, ſaith our Saviour; admoniſhing his Diſciples, to guard themſelves againſt *Falſe Prophets*. And when he warned them to *beware of Men*; he did not mean only of *Heathen Perſecutors*, but of *the Brother* alſo *delivering up the Brother to Death*. Mat. v. 16. Mat. x. 17. ver. 21.

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Secondly; From what has been ſaid, we may learn how ſincerely Thankful we ought to be, for the happy Deliverance of the King and the Three Eſtates of this Realm, from the bloody intended Maſſacre by *Gun-Powder*, which was to have been effected as upon *This* Day.

Thirdly; From hence alſo we may learn to ſet a juſt Value upon the Greatneſs of the *Second* Deliverance, which God worked for us as *again* upon *This* Day, by the Happy Arrival of his late Majeſty King *William*. They who rightly apprehend how *great* a Calamity it is, to be deprived of all Uſe of Reaſon and Conſcience; to be obliged to profeſs in Belief the moſt abſurd Impoſſibilities, and to comply in Practice with the groſſeſt Idolatries; and this under the Penalty of the moſt barbarous and inhumane Cruelties: All men, I ſay, who have a juſt Senſe of the Dreadfulneſs of this Calamity, which is what the Scripture calls *The great Tribulation*, and perpetually compares it to the ancient Captivity of God's people in *Babylon*; nay, ſtiles This, in compariſon of the former, by the name of *Babylon the Great*; will not fail to be very ſincerely Thankful, for the Deliverance of his Country from this ſevereſt of all Temporal Judgments; and very fearful of taking any even remote Step, that may tend towards bringing back ſo great a Deſtruction; and very ſollicitous to make the Government always eaſy in the Hands of ſuch Princes, as are by Principle and by Inclination deſirous to preſerve all the Civil and Religious Rights of the Community. θλίψεως μεγάλης, Rev. vii. 14.

Fourthly; The *Laſt* Inference I ſhall draw from what has been ſaid, is; that we who profeſs the Reformed Religion, and, upon ſtated Solemnities, pretend to return hearty Thanks to God for the wonderful Preſervations of it amongſt us; ought above all things to avoid *thoſe corrupt Practices*, for which we ſo juſtly condemn the Church of *Rome*. *Proteſtants* muſt not *hate* the perſons of *Roman-Catholicks*; nor uncharitably judge every *private* perſon among them to have That Malignity of Spirit, on which the *publick* Dominion of their Church is founded. *Proteſtants*, I ſay, muſt not hate the perſons of *Roman Catholicks*, or of any Others who differ from them: Much leſs ought we to offer them any Injury, Violence, or Wrong: But, on the contrary, we ought to endeavour to convince them of their Errours, by *Strength* of *Reaſon*, and by *Gentleneſs* of *Behaviour*. If a man's Practice be *vicious* and *injurious* to his Fellow-creatures; what *Religion* he *profeſſes*, imports little more to his *Moral* character, than the *Shape* or the *Colour* of his *Cloaths*. What matters it in point of *Religion*, to deteſt the *Violence and Perſecutions* of *Rome*; if men ſtill con-

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tinue Lovers of *Violence* and *Contention*? What matters it in point of *Truth*, to have rejected the *unintelligible Doctrines* of *Rome*; if men ſtill continue fond of *unintelligible Notions*? What matters it in point of *Virtue* and real *Goodneſs*, to have departed from the *Superſtitious Practices* of *Rome*; if men will ſtill be fond of *Superſtitious Practices*? The *Religion of Chriſt* conſiſts, in the Worſhip and Love and Imitation of *God*, and in univerſal Charity and Good-Will towards *Men*. The One of theſe, is *the Firſt and Great Commandment*; and the Other, ſays our Lord, *is like unto it*: And on *Both* of them, depend *the Law and the Prophets*, and the Perfection of the *Goſpel of Chriſt*. If *Proteſtants* at any time depart from This Principle, they depart from their Profeſſion: And whenſoever they do ſo, they juſtly provoke God to deliver them up again into That Darkneſs, from whence they have eſcaped; and into the Power of That Tyranny, from which they have often been ſo marvellouſly delivered.

SERMON

SERMON XVI.

Providential Deliverances from Slavery.

[*Preached on the 5th of November.*]

PSAL. XXXIII. 10.

The Lord bringeth the Counsel of the Heathen to nought; he maketh the Devices of the People of none Effect.

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THIS Psalm, is a Psalm of praise and Thanksgiving, upon the Subject of God's works of Creation and Providence; and the royal Author of it, seems in his enumeration of the Works of God, to equal the Wonders of *Providence* with those of *Creation*. Ver. 6; *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth; he gathereth the waters of the Sea together as an heap, he layeth up the depth in store-houses; Let all the earth fear the Lord, let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him; for he spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast: The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought, he maketh the devices of the People of none effect.*

The *reason why* the Psalmist thus joins the works of Creation and Providence together, as equal Subjects of Praise and Thanksgiving, was the many wonderful *Deliverances* which God had worked for the Nation of the *Jews in general*, and (if this Psalm be *his*) for the Person of *David* in particular; many of

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which Deliverances were ſo extraordinary and remarkable, that they could not poſſibly have been brought about, but by the peculiar Influence of that Divine Providence, which mightily over-rules all things; the Deſigns of the Enemies having ſometimes been laid with ſuch *Secrecy*, and ſometimes carried on with ſuch *ſtrength*, that all Hopes from natural Cauſes ceaſing, it ſeemed that no leſs Power than that, which as it *created*, ſo it *governs* all things, could be able to diſappoint them. Wherefore the Pſalmiſt having declared the Weakneſs and Inſufficiency of all other Cauſes, and the Uncertainty of all other Hopes which men uſually depend upon, concludes, ver. 12; *Bleſſed is the nation whoſe God is the Lord, and the People whom he hath choſen for his own inheritance.*

Now, excepting ſome *few* caſes, wherein God exerted his Almighty Power in plain and undiſputed *miracles*; the Deliverances which Providence has worked at ſeveral times for *this our* Nation from the profeſſed Enemies of its Religion and Liberty, have been in no wiſe inferiour to the greateſt Deliverances that God ever vouchſafed to the Nation of the *Jews*. We need not ſearch for other inſtances, nor mention the many Examples, which cannot but offer themſelves to every one's thoughts. The Two great Deliverances which we This Day commemorate, and are met together to return Thanks to God for, are alone abundantly ſufficient to make good the Obſervation. For whether we conſider the Difficulty and ſmall Probability there was, of preventing the Deſigns laid againſt our Religion and Liberty; or whether we conſider the greatneſs of the Calamities that would have enſued, had thoſe Deſigns took effect; or the Greatneſs of thoſe Bleſſings, which through the Mercy of God did follow upon their being diſappointed; I believe we ſhall not meet with any Event in Hiſtory, wherein the Providence of God can ſeem more viſibly to have concerned itſelf, or to have given more evident Marks of its governing and over-ruling all things. Had that ſecret Treaſon, which was carried on in Darkneſs where no Eye ſaw it, been as ſucceſsful as it was ſecretly contrived; and the Glory and Flower of the Nation been permitted to fall at once by the black Malice of Implacable Men; the Reformation of our Religion, and the Wiſe Conſtitution of our Government had periſhed together; and what unſpeakable Confuſion would have ſucceeded that dreadful Blow, no Mortal can tell. In like manner, had the latter Deſigns which have ſince been carried on againſt this Nation, to ſubvert our Laws and extirpate our Religion, been permitted by the unſearchable Judgment of God to have prevailed and taken effect; we had once again exchanged Religion for Superſtition, and well-conſtituted Government for Tyranny; and together with Us had periſhed the Liberties of all *Europe*. But though the firſt of theſe Attempts was managed with ſo much Caution and Secrecy, as ſeemed to ſecure it from being diſcovered by any humane Wiſdom; and though later Deſigns were carried on with ſuch Advantages of Power, and ſuch Appearance of Authority, as made the Enemies of the Name of Proteſtant, think it impoſſible they ſhould be diſappointed; yet Providence did ſo diſcover the *one*, as to convince the world that there is no Darkneſs nor Shadow of Death where the Workers of Iniquity may hide themſelves; and ſo prevented the *others*, by the ſeaſonable Coming of his late Majeſty of happy Memory; as to ſhow that with God it is all one to ſave by Many or by Few; who *breaketh the arm of the wicked, and weakneth the ſtrength of the mighty, and delivereth the poor from him that is too ſtrong for him.*

But it will be proper to ſpeak more *diſtinctly* and *particularly* of this matter, when we come to apply the *general* Obſervations which I ſhall raiſe from the Text, to the *Special* Occaſion of our aſſembling This Day; in ſome uſeful and practical Inferences from the whole Diſcourſe.

The Obſervations therefore, which may firſt be raiſed *in general* from the Words, are theſe: 1*ſt*, That the Providence of God preſides over and governs all things, and has a peculiar Influence upon all the great Events that happen unto Men. 2*dly*, That this, as it is obſervable in all the great Periods of every particular man's Life, ſo it is more eſpecially and remarkably true, in reſpect

respect of such Events, wherein the Fates of whole Nations and Kingdoms are concerned: *The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought, he maketh the devices of the people to be of none effect.* SERM. XVI.

I. *First*; The Providence of God presides over and governs all things, and has a peculiar Influence upon all the *great Events* that happen unto Men. Upon all the *Great Events*, I say; not to exclude Providence from regarding even the *smallest* things as well as the *greatest*, but because These are easiest and most useful for *Us* to observe; and in These the Footsteps of Providence may with more Certainty be traced.

There was a certain Sect among the Antient Philosophers, who though they pretended to believe the Being of God, yet they denied his particular Providence and Inspection over all Events; And the Actions and Contrivances of many who call themselves Christians, however contrary their Profession may be, give but too just occasion to place them in the same rank. These men thought that the Life of God consisted merely in Rest and doing nothing; and that he had no regard to the Events of Things, or the Actions of men on Earth; but left all to be managed by the Chance or the Fate of Second Causes: They thought, and so far indeed very justly, that God could not but be an infinitely happy Being, perfectly free from all that Care and Labour, that Toil and Anxiety, which makes a great part of the Misery of humane Life: But must he therefore be a mere *unactive* Being? Cannot he with the same Ease wherewith he *made* the World, a work of infinite Power, Wisdom, and Counsel, *govern* it also and preside over it; Cannot he who at one View sees and observes all things that are done in the World, concern himself for the Benefit and Well-government of his Creatures, without diminishing from his own infinite Happiness? especially since Happiness consists, not in doing nothing, but in doing good: and infinite Happiness is nothing else, but the perfectest exercise, of infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness. To see and to know all things that are done in the world, is a natural and necessary Attribute of an Omnipresent Mind: To rule and order all things which are present before him, cannot but be infinitely easy to Almighty Power; and nothing can be more absurd, than to suppose that God being thus necessarily every-where-present, and seeing all things, and being thus infinitely able to determine all Events according to his own Will, should yet be only a careless and unconcerned Beholder of them. It is evident therefore from Reason, that the Providence of God *can* and *must* govern and over-rule all things. And that it *actually* and *in fact* does so, the whole *History* and *Doctrine* of the Scripture abundantly confirms to us. It shows us by numberless Instances, that God has not only upon *special* occasions made use of the Power of *Miracles* for the Preservation of the Righteous, or the Destruction of the Wicked, but that *generally* he governs the Moral World; by providentially directing Natural Causes and Influences, to effect what he determines should be done: That he rewards or punishes men by wholesome or pestilential Air, by fruitful or barren Seasons; that he promotes or disappoints their Designs by the uncertain changes of Winds or Weather; that he employs and directs the Influences of Nature to overthrow the most powerful Armies, to defeat the wisest Counsels, to determine the Differences of Princes, and the Fates of Men and Kingdoms: That the unsearchable Wisdom of Providence directs and steers the most casual and accidental Events, to change the Fortunes of Men, and disappoint the most proper and natural means of Success; so that *the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill; but* that *Time and Chance*, directed by the Providence of God, *happens to them all.* Nay further, the Scripture teaches us, that God not only directs Natural Causes and over-rules the Actions of men to fulfil his own good pleasure, but moreover influences men's minds by strange Concurrences of external causes, or by other more secret and unknown ways, to bring about just Events: That he comforts good men and supports them in their Designs; that he terrifies bad men with strange Amazements, to discover their own Conspira-

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cies, and to fall into the Snares which they had ſecretly laid for others; that *he fruſtrateth the tokens of liars, and maketh diviners mad; turneth wiſe men backward, and maketh their knowledge fooliſh: that a man's heart deviſeth his ways, but the Lord directeth his ſteps:* that *there are many devices in the heart of man; but the counſel of the Lord That ſhall ſtand:* and that *the heart of the Prince is in the hand of the Lord; as the rivers of waters, he turneth it whitherſoever he willeth.*

By theſe and numberleſs other paſſages, illuſtrated with many hiſtorical Examples, which no man can read the Bible without obſerving, the Scripture aſſures us that the Providence of God governs and directs the Events of all things. It remains only to conſider, how this Doctrine agrees with our preſent Experience of things, and is conſiſtent with that fixed courſe of Natural Cauſes, which God ſeems to have eſtabliſhed in the world. And here indeed lies the great Difficulty of all; ſince Men do and cannot but obſerve, that where Miracles are not wrought, God ſuffers the World to be governed by the natural Operations and Efficacy of Second Cauſes. Moſt things go on in a regular and ſettled courſe; and diligent men by ſtudying the Nature of things, and the ordinary Series of Cauſes, have been able in moſt Events to diſcover the Connexion of the Cauſe with the Effect. Hence men of Underſtanding and Induſtry, foreſee very many Events; and by ordering their Affairs accordingly, ſecure to themſelves in moſt of their Deſigns a great probability of Succeſs. And even where Things do not ſucceed according to the Probabilities of known Cauſes, but are diſappointed or changed by ſtrange intervening Accidents, or ſudden and unexpected Turns of things; yet even There it appears generally that the Alteration proceeds from ſome equally natural, though not timely foreſeen Cauſe. When *the Race is not won by the Swift, nor the Battle by the Strong*, as it ought to be in the ordinary courſe of things; yet even in ſuch caſe men are generally able to diſcover, that the unforeſeen Accidents which altered the courſe of things, and prevented the expected Succeſs, were the Effects of ſome Natural Cauſes, which ought to have been taken into the Eſtimate, and would, if men could have attained perfect knowledge of the whole Natures and Powers of things, have entirely changed their Expectations of the Succeſs. Thus the Diſcovery of This Day's wicked Conſpiracy, was owing to a ſtrange ſeries of Accidents, which though utterly impoſſible to be foreſeen by humane Wiſdom, yet, after the Event, appeared not to have any thing in them abſolutely above the power of Nature: And our Deliverances from later Attempts againſt our Religion and Laws, were not ſtrictly Miracles, but plainly owing on one hand to the ill management of our Adverſaries, and on the other hand to the Wiſdom and Conduct of his late Majeſty.

If then things be acknowledged to be Thus, the Difficulty is, how the Interpoſition of Providence is reconcileable with this Regularity of the Operations of Natural Cauſes; and why (as the Scritpure plainly determines) we are bound with all Thankfulneſs to acknowledge the Goodneſs of the Divine Providence in working for us ſuch Deliverances, which yet we do not at the ſame time believe to be properly and ſtrictly miraculous. Now though to This it might perhaps be anſwered (as ſome learned men have done) that the All-wiſe Creator of the World, when he fixed the preſent Laws and appointed the conſtant courſe of Nature, foreſaw at the ſame time all the Diſpoſitions and Exigencies of men, and therefore accordingly ſo ordered the ſeries of Natural Cauſes, as to make the very ſame Proviſion for all theſe Occaſions in the original Conſtitution of things, which he would otherwiſe have done by the miraculous Interpoſition of his Providence: Though, I ſay, it might perhaps ſilence this Objection, to ſay that the Conſtitution of the natural World was ſo ſettled upon God's Foreſight of the Diſpoſitions of the Moral, as that the Juſtice and Goodneſs of Providence muſt equally be acknowledged in all the great Events of Nature, as in miraculous Operations; and this Obſervation might perhaps be of great uſe againſt the Aſſertors of Fate: For, as it is no Objection againſt the Skill of the *Workman*, to ſay that every Wheel of a Watch is moved only naturally according to the frame of its parts; ſo it is no Objection againſt *Providence*,

dence, to ſay that things are brought about by Second Cauſes, ſince it is God who is the Author of thoſe Cauſes: Yet becauſe the Scripture every where plainly teaches that God *actually* interpoſes in the Government of the World; and becauſe it is a more honourable Notion of God, to ſuppoſe him conſtantly inſpecting and ruling all things, than that he ſhould have fixed certain unchangeable Laws of Nature, and then left the World to be governed by them as by Fate; therefore in anſwer to this Difficulty about the Workings of Providence, it is more reaſonable to ſay, that as God muſt be acknowledged to have upon ſome great occaſions made *ſuch* Alterations in the viſible Courſe of Nature, as we call *Miracles*; ſo he does at other times, at leaſt ſo govern and manage the firſt Springs of Natural Cauſes, as to bring about, though without any viſible Alterations of Nature, whatever his infinite Wiſdom ſees fit. And this is ſo far from being contrary to true Philoſophy, or inconſiſtent with the State of Nature and the regular Appearances of Things, that the beſt Philoſophy that ever yet appeared in the world, has not to this day determined, whether the firſt Springs of the commoneſt and moſt univerſal Operations of Nature, be moved by ſome general laws impreſſed by God on Matter, or whether even in Theſe things he does not continually employ the Offices of intelligent Beings: Or rather, it *has* determined, that God is immediately the Author, even of all thoſe we call *Natural*, as well as of Miraculous Events. For to cauſe either the Sun or the Earth to move, is plainly an Effect of the ſame Power, as to cauſe them to ſtand ſtill; and the only reaſon why men uſually look upon One as the immediate hand of God, and the Other they fancy is done without Him; is no other but This, that what God does Once, they cannot but acknowledge is done by *Him*; but what He does Always, they therefore childiſhly think it is not *He* does it at all. But However This be, yet to be ſure nothing can be more reaſonable than to ſay, that God, upon whoſe good pleaſure all the Laws and Powers of Nature perpetually depend, does at leaſt in ſome great Events determine the Influences of Natural Cauſes to produce ſuch or ſuch particular Effects. Thus much we ſee God has put even in the Power of *Men*, that by skilful and artificial Application of Cauſes, they can in many Inſtances determine the natural Powers of things to produce ſuch Effects, as they would not naturally have produced without that guidance and direction of Art: And nothing can be more abſurd, than to imagine that God does leſs in the Government of the World, than even ſome of the meaneſt of his Creatures are able to do. When therefore we ſee Natural Cauſes conſpire ſtrangely and by a long ſeries to produce ſome remarkable Event; we have all the reaſon in the world, to believe that thing brought about by the peculiar direction of Providence; and to behave ourſelves accordingly in our Prayers or Thankſgivings to God. Thus we have all poſſible reaſon to believe, that the Wiſdom of Providence directed that train of Accidents, by which the Great Conſpiracy of This Day was diſcovered: And that the ſame Wiſdom and Power ſince worked for us thoſe later Deliverances, in conſequence of which we ſtill enjoy our Religion and Liberties; and governed the Springs of the firſt cauſes of the Winds and Weather and of numberleſs other Circumſtances of things, on which depended the Succeſs of his late Majeſty's Enterprize; in conſequence of the Succeſs of which, we ſtill enjoy our Religion and Liberty, the happy Effects of that ſeaſonable and neceſſary Revolution, which cannot without the greateſt *Ingratitude*, but be acknowledged with all Thankfulneſs, to have been the immediate Work and ſingular Bleſſing of Providence. For

II. *Secondly*; As this Direction of the firſt Springs of Natural Cauſes by the Providence of God, is to be obſerved and acknowledged in all other conſiderable Events; ſo does it more eſpecially and remarkably diſcover itſelf in the Accompliſhment of ſuch Events, on which the Fates of whole Nations and Kingdoms depend. It muſt indeed be confeſſed, as I have already obſerved, that the ſmalleſt things of all, are no leſs truly Objects of the Care of Providence, than the greateſt; that *without* our *heavenly Father*, not ſo much as *a*

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But the Time will not permit me to enlarge farther on this head. I ſhall therefore only apply briefly what has been ſaid, to our preſent Occaſion, and ſo conclude.

And here I need not detain you with a particular Narrative of the dark Conſpiracy which was deſigned to have been executed as upon This Day: I need not aggravate the incredible Barbarouſneſs of this Attempt, which is not to be parallelled in all the Hiſtories of Time, and which a great many even of the Romiſh Communion, have themſelves been aſhamed of and deſirous to diſown: I need not repreſent the great Craft and Cunning wherewith this Deſign was laid; undiſcoverable, as they thought, by any Wiſdom or Chance: *They took crafty counſel againſt thy people, and conſulted againſt thy hidden ones; they ſaid Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Iſrael may be no more in remembrance*; Pſ. lxxxiii. 4. I need not repeat to you with what *Secrecy* this whole matter was carried on; ſo that the words of *David* are moſt fitly applicable to this Occaſion; *Pſ.* lxiv. 5; *They ſhoot in ſecret at the perfect, they encourage themſelves in an evil matter, they commune of laying ſnares privily, they ſay Who ſhall ſee them?* and *ver.* 6; *They ſearch out iniquities, they accompliſh a diligent ſearch; both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart is deep.* It would alſo be ſuperfluous to give a particular account how this Conſpiracy was diſcovered; how *God ſhot at them ſuddenly with a ſwift arrow, and their own tongues made them to fall*; how (as the wiſe man expreſſes a like matter, *Eccleſ.* x. 20:) *a Bird of the air carried the voice, and that which has wings diſcovered the matter.* For all theſe tranſactions have been often fully and lively repreſented to you, and it would be but tedious to repeat them again.

I need not likewiſe enlarge upon the particulars of the *ſecond* Deliverance, which we this Day commemorate. The thing itſelf is ſtill freſh in all our Memories; and every one that has *any* juſt Senſe of the inhumane Barbarity of the *Popiſh* Religion, and of the extreme wickedneſs of that Great Apoſtacy ſo largely propheſied of in the New Teſtament, cannot but be ſenſible of the *Greatneſs* of every eſcape from it, being a Deliverance from the worſt and moſt dreadful Slavery both of body and mind; together with the *Strangeneſs* of the means by which it was brought about, and the *Suddenneſs* and *Eaſineſs* of its Accompliſhment.

Omitting therefore to repeat things already ſo well known, I ſhall chuſe rather to conclude my Diſcourſe with ſome practical Inferences ſuitable to the Occaſion. And

1ſt; If the Providence of God has certainly a peculiar influence over all the great Events that happen to Mankind; and if the Bleſſings and Deliverances which we this day commemorate, carry upon them as viſible characters of that divine Providence, as any that were ever beſtowed upon any People; then ought the expreſſions of our Acknowledgments and Thankſgivings to God upon this

this occaſion, to be proportionably great and fervent. That in *the general* the Providence of God has a peculiar Influence over all the great Events that happen to Mankind, I have endeavoured to prove in the fore-going Diſcourſe; and that the Deliverances we this day commemorate *in particular*, carry upon them as viſible characters of that divine Providence, as any thing leſs than a direct Miracle can poſſibly do; is evident from all the circumſtances of their accompliſhment. For if the Strangeneſs of Events compared with the ordinary courſe of things; if the diſproportionateneſs of means and cauſes to their effects; if weakneſs triumphing over formidable Strength, and Succeſſes unuſual like thoſe recorded in Scripture; if the diſappointment of the greateſt cunning, and infatuation of the profoundeſt Politicians; if the diſcovery of the ſecreteſt and moſt cautious Plots, by improbable means, and unaccountable accidents; if bringing to nought the greateſt and beſt laid enterprizes, at the very point of their being put in execution; if wicked men's inſnaring themſelves and blowing up their own deſigns, involving themſelves in the Calamities which they deſigned for others; in a word, if *turning wiſe men backward, and making their knowledge fooliſhneſs*; if confounding *the devices of the crafty, ſo that their hands cannot perform their enterprize*; if taking *the wiſe in their own craftineſs*, and turning *down the counſel of the froward headlong*; if all theſe things, I ſay, be tokens of Providence interpoſing in any great Event; then are This day's Deliverances certainly of that kind. Thus was *Pharaoh* overwhelmed, when he had juſt overtaken the Children of *Iſrael*; Thus did *Haman* periſh, when he had procured a royal decree, and had fixed a time to deſtroy the *Jews*; And thus were numberleſs other deſigns mentioned in Scripture, diſappointed by ſtrange, and to humane Wiſdom, unaccountable Providences. Let us then acknowledge the hand that worked theſe things for us, and expreſs our acknowledgments in ſuitable Thankſgivings: Let us *declare God's works*, that is publickly glorify his ſpecial Providence, and celebrate his adorable perfections diſplayed in ſuch extraordinary Events; and provoke others to conſider and do the ſame; that men may *praiſe the Lord for his goodneſs, and for his wonderful works to the children of men*; that they may *offer the ſacrifice of thankſgiving, and declare his works with gladneſs*; that they may *ſpeak the glorious honour of his might, and of his wonderous works*; that they may *declare the glory of his Kingdom, and talk of his terrible acts*. Let us truſt and place our Affiance in God, who hath done ſo great things for us already whereof we rejoice; and learn from the conſideration of former mercies, to rely upon Providence for Deliverance in future Dangers. Thus the Pſalmiſt, when he had praiſed God for paſt Deliverances, ſaying; *Bleſſed be the Lord, who hath not given us over for a prey into their teeth*; *Our Soul is eſcaped as a bird out of the ſnare of the fowler, the ſnare is broken and we are eſcaped*; immediately he adds in the next words; *Our help*, that is, our Truſt and Dependance for the future, *is on the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*

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2*dly*, Since God hath already vouchſafed This Nation ſo many and great Deliverances from the Attempts of Popiſh Superſtition and Cruelty, we ought to be greatly careful to prevent the ſpreading of that Superſtition, that we again feel not the Effects of its Cruelty. That which was ſpoken by *Ezra* upon a like occaſion, may moſt fitly be ſaid by *Us*, at this time; *Ezra* ix. 13; *After all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great treſpaſſes, ſeeing that thou our God haſt puniſhed us leſs than our iniquities deſerve, and haſt given us ſuch deliverances as theſe; ſhould we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of theſe abominations; wouldſt thou not be angry with us till thou hadſt conſumed us ſo that there ſhould be no remnant nor eſcaping?* It highly behoves us therefore to be very vigilant in preventing the growth of that Superſtition, which this Nation hath already ſo often felt the ill Effects of; and to be diligent in endeavouring to reclaim Thoſe who have been ſeduced by it, or have been unhappily educated in the Prejudices of it. God has indeed by great Deliverances freed this Nation from the immediate and imminent Dangers of its prevailing Cruelty; but there are ſtill great Remains of

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That Superſtition in the Nation; and it has by great Induſtry even to This Day been ſo propagated amongſt us, that our Superiours have almoſt every Year been obliged to conſider of new means to prevent it, and to recommend to all ſuch as have any Opportunity, to endeavour heartily the putting a ſtop to it. The *firſt* means that we ſhould uſe to this Purpoſe, is to endeavour to convince them, with all meekneſs of Temper, that the Doctrines of *Rome* are not the Doctrines of Chriſtianity; and to demonſtrate to them by the Influence it hath upon our Lives and Practice, that *our* Religion is better than *theirs*. Our very keeping up the Remembrance of This Day, is a ſufficient Teſtimony, how contrary to the Spirit of Chriſtianity and how utterly unjuſtifiable we account that Zeal, which under pretence of Religion ſubverts even common Humanity, and deſtroys Men's Lives, which Chriſt came into the World to ſave: And nothing can be more proper to convince good and well-meaning Perſons of the Error of That Way, than to ſhow them viſibly how much the Principles of the Reformed Religion are more agreeable to the common Deſign of Religion and to the Spirit of Chriſt, than the Doctrines of *Rome* are. But above all, the greateſt and moſt effectual means that we can poſſibly uſe to prevent the Growth of Popery and Superſtition, is to be infinitely careful not to run into that Atheiſm and profane Libertiniſm, which is the contrary extreme to Superſtition. For as unreaſonable Superſtition enſlaves the Minds of Men, and makes them ſo uneaſy under the Yoke, that they often fly off into the contrary Extreme of Irreligion and Profaneneſs; ſo the natural Effect of Profaneneſs, when Men ſee the intolerable Conſequences and Miſchiefs of it, is to drive weak Minds into the other Extreme of Superſtition. If therefore while we fly from the Superſtition of Popery, we run into the Contempt of *all* Religion; that profane Libertiniſm will probably terminate in Popery again.

Wherefore *3dly* and to conclude, If we deſire to have the Bleſſings of thoſe Deliverances, for which we This Day return our publick Thanks to God, continued amongſt us; let us make ourſelves capable and fit to enjoy them, by a holy and worthy Converſation: Let us in Meekneſs and Peace live agreeably to the Laws and to the Spirit of that Reformed Religion, which God has mercifully reſtored and ſtill continues to us: For it is no Advantage to us to be delivered from the Tyranny of Superſtition, if we run into the Madneſs of Atheiſm and Irreligion. There are not wanting Enemies, who are yet watchful againſt us; and the Judgments of God are ſtill abroad in the Earth. And we have always juſt reaſon to fear, that if we repent not in time, and behave ourſelves worthily under paſt Deliverances, God may yet be forced to try us with heavier Calamities, than any that have hitherto come upon us. But if we every one heartily ſet about a Reformation; he that would have ſpared *Sodom* for the ſake of *ten* righteous Perſons, and *Jeruſalem* for the ſake of any *one* man that had but executed Juſtice and Judgment in it, may be prevailed upon ſtill to avert the Judgments that threaten this our ſinful Nation. But if we cannot be ſo happy as always to obtain Mercy in the Preſervation of our *Country*, yet he that is truly religious ſhall be ſure not to fail of it in the Safety of *himſelf*. Righteous men, ſuch as *Noah*, *Job*, and *Daniel*, though poſſibly they may not be able to deliver a ſinful City which God has doomed to Deſtruction, yet ſhall not fail to *deliver their own Souls*: And he that ſincerely repents and reforms his Life, ſhall at leaſt have the Comfort of Attaining *That* Peace, which the World cannot *give*, and which it cannot *take away*.

Now unto him who hath from time to time delivered us from the mercileſs Deſigns of Wicked and Unreaſonable Men; who did as upon this Day reſcue us from that dreadful Deſtruction which was ready to have ſwallowed us up; and who ſtill brings to light the hidden things of Darkneſs, *and preſerves our Religion and Rights to us, in deſpite of all the malicious and reſtleſs Attempts of our Adverſaries; Unto him who* hath *delivered us, and* doth *deliver us, and we truſt will* ſtill *deliver us, be all Honour*, &c.

SERMON

SERMON XVII.

of the Duty of Charity.

[*A Charity-Sermon.*]

MATT. v. 48.

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.

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I Suppoſe there is little need of premiſing in this place, that by being perfect like God, is not here *meant a* perfection of degrees, but only a ſimilitude or imitation in kind. The higheſt attainable perfections of the moſt excellent creatures in the Univerſe, are infinitely mean and imperfect in compariſon of God, who *charged even his Angels with Folly, and the Heavens are not pure in his Sight.* How much more weak and of no value, muſt the beſt performances of frail, mortal, and ſinful Men, of neceſſity be! But though all that we can poſſibly do, muſt needs fall infinitely ſhort of our moſt perfect pattern, yet we are indiſpenſably obliged to be like it in our proportion, and according to our capacity; and as a finite *can* reſemble infinite, ſo we are to reſemble God, by partaking of the ſame excellencies in *kind*, though they cannot but be infinitely inferiour in *degree.* A Candle, though its Light bears no proportion at all to the Light of the Sun, yet it reſembles it nevertheleſs in giving Light; whereas Darkneſs is directly contrary to Both:

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So the Virtues of Angels and of Men, though they bear no proportion at all to the adorable Perfections of God, yet they resemble them nevertheless in being of the same nature and kind; whereas wickedness is in its whole kind a State of contrariety, opposition and enmity. A perfect and most complete example is set before us for our imitation, that aiming always at that which is most excellent, we may *grow* continually, and make a perpetual Progress in the ways of Virtue; and though we can never come up to our pattern itself; yet it is sufficient that we may justly be said to become *like* unto God, when, as the Apostle expresses it, we *are made partakers of the Divine Nature*; And such Imitation of God, as our frail and mortal nature is capable of, is truly and in a proper Sense the comparative Perfection of our *Humane Nature*; as absolute Perfection is the Perfection of the *Divine*.

This may suffice for explication of the words in general. But then more particularly, *Perfection*, in the Scripture phrase, and as it is recommended to us as a Duty, to be pursued and attained to by us in imitation of God; signifies usually one or other of these four *special* Virtues or Excellencies.

1*st*; It signifies sometimes *Purity* and *Holiness*; a being separated from, and raised above, worldly and sensual desires; the *keeping ourselves unspotted from the World*, as St. *James* expresses himself; and fixing our affections upon divine and heavenly and spiritual things. Thus, 1 *Pet.* i. 15; *As he which has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation*; *Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.* Which words are taken out of the Book of *Leviticus*, where they are repeated three several times, to the children of *Israel*; and answer to that precept which God had before given to *Abraham*, Gen. xvii. 1; *I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect.*

2*dly*; In some other places of Scripture, the word, *Perfection*, signifies our conforming ourselves to the example of our Saviour, in *suffering patiently*, when God calls us to it, and parting with all things willingly for *his* sake. Our Saviour himself is described to have been made *perfect* by *Sufferings*; Heb. ii. 10. In prophesying of which before-hand, he expresses it in the same phrase, *Luke* xiii. 32; *I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be* perfected. And warning his Disciples of the persecutions they must expect to meet with, he tells them, *Luk.* vi. 40; *The Disciple is not above his Master*; *but every one that is* perfect, *shall be as his Master*; that is, as 'tis explained in the parallel place, *Matt.* x. 24; must expect to be persecuted like him. And giving instruction to the young man, who desired to know what he must do to be perfect; *If thou wilt be* perfect, saith he, *go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come and follow* me.

3*dly*; In other places of Scripture, because *universal Love* in the highest and most exalted degree; forgiving of injuries, and doing Good even to our bitterest Enemies; is one of the great Improvements and Excellencies of Duty, which the Christian Religion has introduced, and wherein it exceeds all other Institutions of Religion that ever were in the World; therefore This also is sometimes stiled *Perfection*; and the practice of this Duty is called *being perfect*. Thus the words of the Text seem in their first and most literal Sense to be understood, by their connexion with what goes before. For when our Saviour had commanded his Disciples, ver. 44; *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you*: *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven*; *for he maketh his Son to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust*: he adds immediately in the words of the Text; *Be ye* therefore *perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect*; that is Imitate *ye therefore* this excellent perfection of God; and as *he* does good even to the unholy and unthankful, so do *ye* forgive and do good even to your enemies; For this is the *Perfection* of the Christian State.

Lastly; Perfection in other places signifies *Mercy and Goodness*, works of *Charity* and *Beneficence*; which the Christian Religion recommends to us with the greatest Earnestness, with the most pressing Arguments, and with the amplest

ampleſt Promiſes of an exceeding great Reward. This Interpretation of the word, St. *Luke* authoriſes in the parallel place to the Text; where, repeating the very ſame Diſcourſe of our Saviour; inſtead of theſe words, *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect*, he expreſſes it thus; *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father alſo is merciful*; Luke vi. 36. And St. *Paul*, ſpeaking of the ſame excellent Duty of Charity, calls it the *bond of Perfection*; Col. iii. 14; *And above all theſe things put on Charity, which is the bond of perfectneſs.* SERM. XVII.

In this latter Senſe therefore, I ſhall take leave to underſtand the Words at this time; and ſhall accordingly endeavour in the following Diſcourſe to recommend to you this excellent Duty of Charity, in the following Method:

1*ſt*. By ſhowing how many and great Obligations we are continually under, to practiſe this Duty.

2*dly*, What great Benefits and Advantages accrue to *ourſelves*, by the Practice of it. And,

3*dly*, In what particular Methods and Inſtances, it may beſt and moſt uſefully be performed.

I. How many and great *Obligations* we are continually under, to practiſe this Duty. And becauſe they are great and numerous, it may be uſeful to diſtinguiſh them into their proper Heads, as they ariſe from the Conſideration either of God, our Neighbour, or our ſelves. And,

1*ſt*, With reſpect to *God*. *Is it not* the thing that he has choſen, *to looſe the bands of wickedneſs, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppreſſed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry; and that thou bring the poor that are caſt out to thy houſe? when thou ſeeſt the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy ſelf from thine own fleſh?* Nothing is more agreeable to the Nature of God, and renders us more conformable to the Excellencies of that moſt perfect pattern; than the exerciſe of Beneficence and Goodneſs. The Divine Nature is Goodneſs itſelf; and his bountiful Kindneſs extends itſelf perpetually over all his works. This is the Attribute which he principally delights to exerciſe; and in which, of all others, he moſt expects and requires we ſhould imitate him. Our Saviour in the Text, and in all his Diſcourſes, propoſes this example to us to follow; and frequently repeats it, that hereby only we can truly become the children of our Father which is in Heaven. This Imitation of God, is the Foundation of all Religion, and the true Spring, the inward and natural Principle and Ground of Happineſs: Wherefore we are equally obliged both in Duty and Intereſt, as we hope to be made Partakers of that Happineſs, which is the Perfection of our Nature, and for which God ultimately deſigned us; to prepare and fit ourſelves for it, by acquiring that Divine Frame and temper of mind, that beneficent and good Diſpoſition, which alone can qualify us and make us capable to enjoy it. This Argument would be equally ſtrong, even though we had an abſolute and ſupreme Right to the things we poſſeſs; as God has over the whole Creation. But *we* are further to conſider, that this is not *our* Caſe. *We* are not abſolute Lords of the things we poſſeſs, but enjoy them merely by the Divine Permiſſion and good Pleaſure. We are Stewards intruſted with our portion of good things, under the Supreme Houſeholder the Governour of the Univerſe; and we are to give a ſtrict account, in what manner we diſpoſe of them. We *may* employ them to all the neceſſary uſes, and all the reaſonable Conveniences, nay and even to the innocent *diverſions* alſo of Life; but we muſt not conſume them upon Luſts and Follies, and *with-hold good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of our hand to do it*, Prov. iii. 27. Some *portions* at leaſt of what we enjoy, are due to God, as an acknowledgment of our dependence upon him for the *whole*; and inſtead of coſtly Sacrifices and Burnt-offerings to *himſelf*, he requires only that we be willing to relieve the neceſſities of *Men like ourſelves*; And he ſeems in the Wiſdom of his Providence to have made a very unequal Diſtribution of the Bleſſings of this Life *on purpoſe*, that we might have continual opportunities of paying this reaſonable homage Iſ. lviii. 6.

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to him, according to our respective Abilities. Thus much were evidently due to him, even tho' we had been innocent and sinless Creatures; But now how greatly is this motive inforced, when we reflect how all the Blessings with which he daily crowns us, were not only *originally* undeserved, but in their *continuance* are perpetual instances of mercy and compassion towards us! When by Sin we had forfeited all title to his Love and Favour, yet still he *causes his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust*. And not only continues to us these *temporal* Blessings; but moreover, when we by Sin had ruined ourselves and must have been miserable for ever, sent his Son into the World, to restore us to a capacity of recovering *that* Happiness, which is *eternal*. And now, What shall we render unto the Lord, for all these instances of his Mercy towards us? *Can our Goodness extend to Him?* or *can a Man be profitable to his Maker?* No; The only Way *we* have of expressing our Gratitude towards him, is by exercising some little Similitude of that mercy and compassion towards our *Brethren*, in relieving their *temporal* wants; which he has extended to *us* in an infinitely great degree, in our necessities *both temporal and eternal*. This he has expressly commanded us by our Saviour and his Apostles, and it fills almost every Page both of the Old and New Testament, that it is the return he principally expects from us *for all the benefits that he has done unto us*. *This* he declares he will accept as the best expression of our Love towards him, and as if the benefit of it had accrued immediately to himself: *He that hath pity on the poor, lendeth unto the Lord: and look, what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again*, Prov. xix. 17. and *inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these my Brethren*, saith our Saviour, *ye have done it unto me*, St. *Matt.* xxv. 45. Concerning *This*, the great Enquiry will be made at the Day of Judgment; and according to our behaviour in *this* particular, will the final Sentence, as our Saviour himself has described to us the Solemnity of that great Day, be principally determined: *I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye cloathed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.* Not as if any *other* good or evil Action should then be over-looked by the Eye of the All-seeing Judge; but to intimate to us, that a charitable or uncharitable disposition, is a principal and *ruling* part of a Man's Character; the most considerable Test of the whole frame and temper of his Mind; with which all other Virtues or Vices respectively, will almost necessarily be connected. To the performance of *This* Duty, God has in Scripture annexed the Promise of more and greater rewards, than are specified in the Exhortations to any other single Virtue; and to the Neglect of it are made proportionably, the greatest of Threatnings; that *he shall have judgment without mercy, who hath showed no mercy*, and that *whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard*. In the Characters given of good Men in Scripture, their exercise of this Duty of Charity, always makes a principal part of their Condemnation: *I delivered the poor that cried* says *Job, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him: The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the Widows heart to sing*, ch. xxix. ver. 12; and in the New Testament, the Character of *Cornelius*; to whom God vouchsafed to send an Apostle on purpose, with a singular Commission; and on whom the Holy Ghost fell, even before his Baptism; was that he was *a devout man, and one that feared God, and gave much alms to the people*. To conclude this Head: As in *all* sorts of things, the whole kind usually receives its denomination from that part which is most excellent; so the word *Righteousness* in *general*, is frequently used in Scripture to signify *Mercy and Charity* in *particular*; and Charity is affirmed by St. *Paul* to be the *End of the Commandment*; and that *he that loveth his Brother, hath fulfilled the whole Law*.

2dly; With respect to our *Neighbour*, the Obligations we are under to practise this excellent Duty, are likewise great and many. We are all partakers of the same common Nature, and are therefore under the same Ties of common humanity.

humanity. God *has made of one blood*, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the Earth*, Acts xvii. 26; and therefore the command in the Text is thus expreſſed, that we *hide not ourſelves from* our own Fleſh. We are All ſubject to the ſame Infirmities, All liable to fall under the ſame Misfortunes, All obnoxious to the ſame Wants; and therefore have All of us Reaſon to exerciſe that compaſſion, which no Man knows but he may ſtand in need of himſelf. *The merciful man*, ſaith *Solomon*, *doth good to his own Soul*; *but he that is cruel, troubleth his own Fleſh*, Prov. xi. 17; and the Prophet *Iſaiah*, exhorting Men to the exerciſe of Charity, expreſſes it by *not hiding themſelves from their own Fleſh*, Iſ. lviii. 7. God is equally the common Father of us all; and in his Government of the World, *accepteth not the perſons of Princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor*; *for they are all the work of his hands. The rich and the poor*, ſaith the wiſe Man, *do meet together*; *the Lord is the Maker of them all*, Prov. xxii. 2. So *we* in like manner, are to make no diſtinction of Perſons; not by behaving ourſelves alike towards all; but by performing with like chearfulneſs our reſpective duty towards all, according to their ſeveral Circumſtances; ſhowing with equal readineſs compaſſion to the Poor, as we do reſpect to the Rich, and Honour to thoſe in Power and Authority. God has in the whole an equal regard to all his Creatures; but in the preſent State has made an unequal diſtribution of temporal Bleſſings, *that one man's abundance ſhould ſupply another man's want, that there may be an equality*, 2 Cor. viii. 14. By an *Equality* the Apoſtle does not mean, that Chriſtians are obliged to bring themſelves all to a Level; (though the *firſt* Converts indeed did ſo, for Reaſons particular to thoſe Times;) but He means that there ought to be among them ſuch mutual aſſiſtance and relief, as that the wants and neceſſities of *all*, may be proportionably ſupplied.

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The Chriſtian Religion has ſuper-added particular Arguments to the general ones drawn from Nature and Reaſon, to inforce our Obligation to this Duty. We have *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptiſm, one Body, and one Spirit, even as we are called in one Hope of our calling*: We are all Members of one Body, and *members alſo one of another*, Rom. xii. 6. We all profeſs to be Worſhippers of that One Supreme God, who *giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not*. We are all redeemed by the blood of that Saviour, and depend upon his merits, for the hope of Salvation; who voluntarily became poor, that *we* might be made rich; who *went about doing good*; who laid down his life for our ſakes; and in all this, ſet us *an example that we ſhould follow his ſteps*; leaving it to his Diſciples as his laſt Commandment and moſt earneſt Requeſt, that they would *love one another as he had loved them*; making it the Badge and diſtinguiſhing Mark, whereby *all men* ſhould *know that they were his Diſciples, if they had love one towards another*; and declaring it to be the Sum and End of that Religion, which he came to eſtabliſh in the World, that we ſhould *love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and our neighbours as ourſelves*. Theſe conſiderations, if we will be Chriſtians indeed, cannot but produce in us the greateſt Endearments of mutual affection; and thoſe, if they be ſincere, muſt neceſſarily ſhow forth themſelves in ſuitable effects. *We ought*, if need were, *even to lay down our lives for the brethren*, ſaith St. *John*, 1 *Joh.* iii. 16: But how do we anſwer this character, if, when we ſee our Brother in want, we are not willing to part with any of the Superfluities of life, to relieve *his* Neceſſities, for whom Chriſt was not unwilling to die? In the Primitive Times the Diſciples ſold all that they had, and diſtribution was made to every one according as he had need: God does not *now* require any ſuch thing of *us*; but we are very ungrateful to him, if, when the circumſtances of Things are ſo changed, that far leſs is required of us; we be now more unwilling to contribute our *ſmall* proportion, than they were then to offer up their *whole* Eſtates. The leaſt we can do, is to give ſuch *experiment of this miniſtration*, as St. *Paul* expreſſes himſelf, that Men may *gloriſy God for our profeſſed Subjection to the Goſpel of Chriſt, and for our liberal diſtribution to our brethren and to all men*; 2 Cor. ix. 13.

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3*dly*; With respect to *ourselves*, the Obligations incumbent upon us to be charitable and beneficent, are very considerable. Compassion is, by the Wisdom of our great Creator, implanted in the very frame of our Nature; and Men cannot without great and long habits of Wickedness, root out of their Minds so noble and excellent an Inclination. 'Tis almost as natural for us to feel an agreeable Satisfaction and unexpressible Pleasure of mind, upon *satisfying a hungry Soul with bread*, or *clothing the naked with a Garment*; as 'tis for *Them* to be pleased with the Sense of their being relieved from these natural Wants. And the greater abilities and opportunities God has endued any Man with, of enlarging his bowels of Compassion, and doing good to greater Numbers of his Fellow-creatures, and diffusing his Virtue more widely through the World in acts of bounty and beneficence, in imitation of the great Creator and Preserver of all things; the greater Capacities and Advantages has such a one, of obtaining higher degrees of that Satisfaction and Complacency of mind, in the perfection of which consists in great measure the Happiness of God himself. On the contrary, *what* pleasure, *what* benefit is there in the possession of those good Things, which after supplying our own necessities, and making reasonable Provision for our Families; are laid up as useless and unprofitable superfluities? Concerning which, *What good*, saith the wise Man, *is there in them to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their Eyes?* Real Good indeed, and any true advantage, there seldom is; but very many Times great mischief, and strong Temptations. *There is a sore evil*, saith *Solomon*, *which I have seen under the Sun*; *riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt*: And *they that will be rich*, saith St. *Paul*, *fall into temptations and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts*; *which drown men in Destruction and Perdition.* If we intend only to secure ourselves, against future contingencies; a reasonable provision of this kind, is neither contrary to Religion, nor inconsistent with Charity; but beyond this, an unbounded desire of heaping up great Riches, is by no means so advantagious in this very respect, as a charitable dispensing them in wise proportions would be. For such is the instability of all temporal Things, that as the wise Man elegantly expresses it, *Riches make themselves wings, and fly away, as an Eagle towards Heaven*; that is, we cannot with all our Care, secure them to our selves for any certain Time; much less are *Riches for ever*, or do our possessions *endure for all generations*. We know not how soon they may be snatch'd from *Us*, by numberless unforeseen Accidents; or we may as suddenly be taken from *them*, and our Soul be required of us this very Night. In this Case no other part of them will be really beneficial to us, but that which by works of Charity hath been before *lent unto the Lord*, who in the Life to come *will repay it again*. And even in respect of our continuance in this *present* World, That which has been well laid out in doing Good to Mankind, has a greater Probability of turning to our Advantage even *here*; (considering the variety of Accidents all human Affairs are subject to;) than that which may have been covetously treasured up. For, as *Solomon* excellently expresses this matter, *Cast thy bread upon the Waters, and thou shalt find it after many days*; *Give a portion to seven, and also to eight, for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth*, Eccles. xi. 1.; and iii. 31. *He that doth good turns, is mindful of that which may come hereafter*; *and when he falleth, he shall find a stay.* But this leads me to the

II*d* Thing I proposed to speak to, namely, What great Benefits and Advantages accrue to ourselves, by the Practice of this excellent Duty. And these I have but time barely to mention. And

1*st*; As has already been hinted; the Charitable Man in the natural and ordinary course of Things lays up for himself a truer Security against the Accidents of the World, in the Love and Favour, the Affection and Good-Will of Men; than he could do by hoarding up the largest treasures. For these he may be robbed of by many Accidents; but *he which giveth to the poor, shall not lack*, saith *Solomon*; *and he that deviseth liberal things*, saith the Prophet, *by liberal things shall he stand.*

2*dly*;

2*dly*; He leaves behind him an honourable memory, which will be a benefit to his Children and Posterity after him. *He has dispersed abroad, he has given to the poor, his righteousness endureth for ever, his horn shall be exalted with honour*: *His seed shall be mighty upon earth, the generation of the upright shall be blessed*, Ps. cxii. 9, 2. And this humanly speaking, even in the natural consequence and tendency of things. But

3*dly*; Such a person has moreover special Promises of the particular Blessing and Protection of Providence to himself and his posterity. *The liberal Soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself*, Prov. xi. 25. *If thou draw out thy Soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted Soul, then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day. And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy Soul in drought, and make fat thy bones, and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not*, Is. lviii. 10. *Be as a Father unto the Fatherless, and instead of a Husband unto their Mother; so shalt thou be as the Son of the most High, and he will love thee more than thy Mother doth*, Eccles. iv. 10. But because now under the Gospel, temporal Blessings are not dispensed with the same certainty and regularity, as in the time of the *Jews*; therefore

4*thly*; The Duty of Charity has likewise the largest promises of the Life to come. He *that soweth bountifully*, saith St. *Paul*, *shall reap bountifully*: And our Saviour affirms of them that abound in this grace, that they *make to themselves bags which wax not old*; and lay up *a treasure that faileth not, in the heavens, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through and steal.* And, as was before observed, in his description of the process at the great Judgment, he represents our Behaviour in this one respect, as that which will principally determine the final and irreversible Sentence at that dreadful Day.

Lastly; The Scripture frequently intimates, that Charity is one of the best Instruments of Repentance, and of assuring to us the pardon of past Sins. *Break off thy Sins by Repentance*, said *Daniel* to the King of *Babylon*, *and thy iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Water will quench a flaming fire*, saith the wise Son of *Sirach*, *and alms maketh an atonement for Sins*, Eccles. iii. 39. *Blessed are the merciful*, saith our Saviour himself, *for they shall obtain mercy.* And *Charity*, saith St. *Peter*, *shall cover the multitude of Sins.* The meaning is not, that Charity will excuse any man's continuance in Sin; but that it is an excellent mark and evidence of the Truth and Sincerity of our Repentance, and will afford us greater comfort and assurance in the expectation of the full pardon of Sins past and forsaken. And in this Sense we are to understand those Words of the Author of the Book of *Ecclesiasticus*, ch. xxix. ver. 9; *Help the poor for the commandments sake, and turn him not away because of his poverty. Lay up thy treasure according to the commandment of the most high, and it shall bring thee more profit than gold. Shut up alms in thy store-houses, and it shall deliver thee from all affliction. It shall fight for thee against thine enemies, better than a mighty shield and strong spear.* It remains in the

III*d* and *last* place, That we consider briefly, in what particular Methods and Instances, this Duty may best and most usefully be performed. And here, the several Manners of performing this Duty, are as various as the necessities of those who want to be relieved. We are to visit the sick, to relieve the needy, to feed the hungry, to cloath the naked, to comfort the afflicted, to instruct the ignorant, to reprove the wicked; in a word, to do every thing that we can observe will be beneficial to the Body or to the Soul of our Brother; as the Providence of God shall offer us opportunities, or as every man's Prudence shall direct him in the choice of objects on which to dispose his Charity. Concerning which there are no certain rules to be given; but every man has his Liberty to employ his bounty in such manner, as to himself shall seem best, and most useful to the purposes he is chiefly desirous to promote. Only here I must not omit to observe, that there is one comprehensive method of Charity, which in its extent and effects is a compendium of all the instances of beneficence in

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one; and That is the education of poor children, to which your contribution is now desired. This is *feeding the hungry, and cloathing the naked with a garment*; this is instructing the ignorant, and propagating the knowledge of the Gospel of Christ; This is early sowing the Seeds of virtue and piety, and preventing the first beginnings of those habits of wickedness, which afterwards perhaps no Zeal for Reformation of manners would ever be able to root out; This is preventing idleness and poverty, and all their consequent ill effects; and (by a double benefit) making those to be useful members of the publick, who otherwise might be a burden and a hindrance to it. This is at once relieving the necessities of the present generation, and preventing the wants of those which are to come. To *this* therefore we are exhorted by all those arguments *in conjunction*, which *singly* incite us to dispense our Charity in any particular instances. To this we are invited by all the considerations of publick benefit, and by all the Motives of Religion. To this we are encouraged by the united force of all those promises at once, which in Scripture are made upon divers occasions to the several methods of exercising Mercy and Charity. Which that they may have their full effect and influence upon us, *God of his infinite mercy*, &c.

SERMON

SERMON XVIII.

Of the Neceſſity of Offences ariſing againſt the Goſpel.

LUKE xvii. 1.

It is impoſſible but that Offences will come; but wo unto Him through whom they come.

AS, in matters of *Property and Civil Right*, it cannot be but Wars and Deſolations will ariſe among Men; the Cauſe of which Calamities ought always to be charged, not upon Him who happens to ſtrike the firſt ſtroke, but upon Him who by Oppreſſion, Pride, and Ambition, unjuſtly encroaching upon his Neighbour's Rights, makes the Breach unavoidable: So, in matters of *Religion* likewiſe, it is impoſſible but that Offences *will* come. The Progreſs of the *Goſpel*, and the Prevailing of *Truth* in the World, *will* be hindred by the ill behaviour of *Some*; And the Practice of *Righteouſneſs*, among thoſe who have already embraced the Truth in Profeſſion, *will* be diſcouraged by the Corruption and Perverſeneſs of *Others*. But *Wo be to that Man*, ſays our Saviour, through *whom theſe Offences come*: Wo be to *Him*, who by his Wickedneſs hinders the Propagation of *Truth*, or the practice of *Virtue*. Concerning *Other* Sinners, and ſuch

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as through Infirmity fall into Errors of all kinds, our Saviour always ſpeaks with great Tenderneſs and Compaſſion; treating them, as a Phyſician does a weak Patient, with all poſſible Gentleneſs and Care. But thoſe who through Pride and a Tyrannical Spirit oppoſe and ſet themſelves againſt the Truth, or through Ambition and for worldly Ends perſiſt in things which neceſſarily cauſe Diviſions and Contentions among Chriſtians, or by profligate Living corrupt and debauch Mankind: againſt thoſe through whom *ſuch* Offences come, he always denounces the moſt ſevere *Wo*.

The word, *Offence*, in its *general* and moſt uſual acceptation, ſignifies *every Sin*, every Action whereby God is offended or diſpleaſed. But in the *Text*, it ſeems more particularly to be meant of *ſuch* Sins, as are occaſions either of deterring Men from embracing the Goſpel, or of tempting them to diſobey it. For ſo our Saviour in the very next words, after he had declared, *Wo be to him through whom Offences come*, explains it by adding, ver. 2. *Better were it for him, that a milſtone were hanged about his neck, and he caſt into the Sea, than that he ſhould offend one of theſe little ones*; that he ſhould *offend* them, that is, that he ſhould caſt a *ſtumbling-block* before them; ſo the word *literally* ſignifies; that he ſhould cauſe them to Sin, that he ſhould diſcourage them in their duty, that he ſhould tempt them to offend God. In the *old law*, it is written, *Deut.* xxvii. 18. *Curſed be He that maketh the Blind to wander out of the way*; and *Lev.* xix. 14. *Thou ſhalt not put a ſtumbling-block before the Blind, but ſhalt fear thy God.* In the *literal* Senſe, the Commandment is right, and, no doubt, intended in the Law: But the *ſpiritual* Senſe is of more importance, and perhaps *ultimately* intended in the *Law itſelf*; Curſed be He, that by his Example or Authority, maketh the Weak to wander out of the way of Righteouſneſs. In the *parallel* place of St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel, our Saviour ſtill more expreſsly explains This to be the meaning of the Text; ch. xviii. 6; *Whoſo*, ſays he, *ſhall* offend *one of theſe little ones that believe in Me*; one of theſe *little ones*; that is, any plain and ſincere Chriſtian, ſuch a one as in the foregoing part of his Diſcourſe he had compared for ſimplicity and ſincerity to a little Child; *Whoſo*, ſays he, *ſhall* offend *one of theſe little ones*; whoſo ſhall draw or lead ſuch a one into Sin, *better were it for him that a milſtone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the Sea.* And then he goes on, ver. 7. *It muſt needs be that Offences come*; *but Wo to that Man*, by *whom*, (not, by whoſe *occaſion* perhaps, but by whoſe *Fault*,) *the Offence cometh.* In which paſſage what he means by *Offence*, he again explains, ver. 10;—*Take heed that ye* deſpiſe not *one of theſe little ones*; take heed leſt ye think it a light thing, a Matter of ſmall conſequence, to draw them into Sin; *for I ſay unto you, that in Heaven their Angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven*: that is, thoſe mean and ſincere Perſons, whom ye have ſo little regard for, are the Care of Angels, and under the Protection of God.

But to conſider more diſtinctly the words of the Text: *It is Impoſſible*, ſays our Saviour, *but that Offences will come*; *but Wo unto Him*, Wo to That Man, or Body of Men, through *whom they come.* In Diſcourſing upon theſe words, it will be proper to ſhow particularly, 1*ſt*, *What* the principal of thoſe *Offences* are, which hinder the propagation of the Goſpel of Truth. 2*dly*, In *what* Senſe our Saviour muſt be underſtood to affirm, that it is *impoſſible* but ſuch offences *will* come; or, as it is expreſſed in St. *Matthew*, that it muſt *needs be* that Offences come. 3*dly*, Why a *particular Wo* is, by way of *emphaſis and diſtinction*, denounced againſt the Perſons *by whom* theſe Offences come. 4*thly*, and *laſtly*, I ſhall draw ſome *particular Inferences* from the Whole.

I. In the *Firſt* place, it will be proper to conſider, *what* the principal of thoſe *Offences* are, which hinder the Propagation of the Goſpel of Truth. And though *every thing* that is faulty in *any* kind, does in its meaſure and degree contribute to This Evil; yet whoever conſiders the State of the Chriſtian World, and the Hiſtory of the Church in all Ages from the Beginning, will find that the Great *Offences*, (or, as the original word literally ſignifies, the *Stumbling-*

bling-Blocks) which have all along chiefly hindered the Progreſs of true Chriſtianity, are theſe which follow. SERM. XVIII.

1*ſt*, *Corruption of Doctrine*. The Goſpel of Chriſt, as taught by himſelf, and his Apoſtles in its original Plainneſs and Purity, is a Doctrine of Truth and Simplicity, a Doctrine ſo eaſy to be underſtood, ſo reaſonable to be practiſed, ſo agreeable to the natural Notions and reaſon of Mankind, ſo beneficial in its effects if Men were really governed by it; teaching them nothing but the Worſhip of the True God, thro' the Mediation of Chriſt; and towards each Other, Juſtice, Righteouſneſs, Meekneſs, Charity, and univerſal Good-Will; in expectation of a future judgment, and of a laſting State of Happineſs in a better World, for them who love God and keep his Commandments: This Doctrine of Chriſt, I ſay, in its native Simplicity and Purity, is ſo reaſonable, ſo excellent, and of ſuch irreſiſtible Evidence; that had it never been *corrupted* by Superſtitions from *within*, it never could have been oppoſed by Power from *without*; but it muſt of neceſſity have *captivated* Mankind, *to the obedience of Faith*: till the *knowledge of the Lord had filled the Earth, as the Waters cover the Sea*. But *Offences* ſoon came, and the Enemy ſowed *Tares* among this Wheat. The *Jewiſh* Believers, even in the Apoſtles own times, contended for the neceſſity of obſerving the *rites and ceremonies* of the Law of *Moſes*; And This gave juſt *Offence* to the *Gentiles*, and deterred them from readily embracing the Goſpel. Others, built *hay and ſtubble* upon the foundation of Chriſt; bringing in *mixtures* of *Jewiſh Fables*, and *queſtions that miniſtred ſtrife, rather than godly edifying*; and introducing (after the Example of the *Phariſees*,) *will-worſhip*, and *voluntary humilities*, and *commandments of Men*; which, like a Cloud darkned the clear Light, and obſcured the inexpreſſible *native* beauty of the *glorious Goſpel of Chriſt*. After This, *Other* Offences aroſe from among the *Gentile*-Converts, who by degrees corrupting themſelves after the Similitude of the Heathen-Worſhippers, introduced Saints and Images, and Pompous Ceremonies, and Grandeur into the Church, inſtead of true Virtue and Righteouſneſs of Life. Concerning Theſe, our Saviour ſpeaks, *Rev.* ii. 14; *Thou haſt them that hold the Doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to caſt a ſtumbling-block before the children of Iſrael, to eat things ſacrificed unto Idols, and to commit fornication*: By *fornication*, meaning *ſpiritual fornication*, or corruption of the plain and uniform Worſhip of God. Theſe were *Offences indeed*; Offences, which gave occaſion at length, to the riſe and growth of the *Turkiſh* Empire, in oppoſition to Chriſtianity; Offences, which have all along prevented the Remains of the Nation of the *Jews*, from univerſally embracing the Profeſſion of Chriſt's Religion: Offences, which together with the introducing of dark and unintelligible Doctrines, and the requiring of blind Submiſſion to an *Infallible Guide*, inſtead of exhorting Men to ſtudy ſeriouſly the *word of God*, and to live in the Practice of all *virtue and righteouſneſs* in expectation of that Great Day when God ſhall judge every Man according to his Works; ended at laſt in that Great and General Corruption, which the Scripture calls, *Myſtery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth*. This therefore is the *Firſt* Great Offence, which hinders the propagation of the Goſpel of Truth: *Corruption of Doctrine*; or, Deſtroying the Plainneſs and Simplicity of the Religion of Chriſt.

2*dly*, The *Next* is; *Diviſions*, *Contentions*, and *Animoſities* among Chriſtians; ariſing from Pride, and from a Deſire of Dominion, and from building matters of an uncertain Nature, and of humane Invention upon the Foundation of Chriſt. Other *Foundation*, ſays the Apoſtle, *can no man lay, than that which is laid, even Jeſus Chriſt*. Upon This Foundation, *the whole Building fitly framed together, groweth unto an Holy Temple in the Lord*; ſupported by Righteouſneſs and true Virtue, and united in one Holy Bond of Charity and Love. *By This*, ſays our Saviour, *ſhall all men know that ye are my Diſciples, if ye have Love one to another*. And St. *John* tells us, that *God is Love; and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God*. And St. *Paul* declares, that *Love is the Fulfilling of the Law*, Rom. xiii. 8; For, all the Commandments, ſays he, *Thou ſhalt not kill, thou ſhalt not ſteal*, and

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ſo on; *and if there be any other Commandment*, they are all *briefly comprehended in This Saying, Thou ſhalt Love thy Neighbour as thy ſelf.* Did Men rightly underſtand *This* to be the Great End of Chriſt's Religion, and ſincerely endeavour to practiſe it accordingly; *whence* then could *Heats* and *Enmities, Contentions and Animoſities*, poſſibly ariſe among *Chriſtians*; among thoſe, whoſe Religion teaches them nothing but Meekneſs, Goodneſs, and Charity; *Charity* towards their *Brethren*, and *Meekneſs* even to *thoſe that oppoſe themſelves?* St. *James* ſhows us the only Spring, from *whence* Contentions ariſe; Ch. iv. 1. *from whence*, ſays he, *come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even from your Luſts?* from the Luſt of *Dominion*, and *Temporal Power*; from the Luſt of *Contentiouſneſs*, *Peeviſhneſs*, or *Ambition*; from the Luſt of being Lords over each other's Faith, inſtead of being Helpers towards the common Salvation. *Rom.* xvi. 17; *Mark them which* cauſe *Diviſions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine which ye have learned*; (that is, contrary to the Doctrine which ye have learned of *Chriſt and his Apoſtles*;) Mark thoſe, who contrary to This Doctrine, *cauſe* Diviſions, by laying the great Streſs, in matters of Religion, upon Commandments and *Traditions of* Men, *Col.* ii. 8. Almoſt all *Heats* and *uncharitable Contentions* among Chriſtians, have in all Ages ſprung from this Root: not ſo much concerning the Commandments of *God*, which are plain and eaſy to be underſtood by *All*; as about the *Impoſitions*, and the *Authority* of *Men*. Theſe have been the *great Offence*, which has hindred the Converſion of the World to Chriſt; while Infidel Nations obſerve, that Chriſtians who preach that their Religion is *Charity*, yet *hate* and *revile* and *perſecute* each other. The *Great Offence*, I ſay, which in all Nations and in all Ages has hindred the Propagation of the Goſpel of Truth, has been a hypocritical Zeal to ſecure by Force a fictitious Uniformity of Opinion, which is indeed impoſſible in nature; inſtead of the real Chriſtian Unity of Sincerity, Charity, and mutual Forbearance, *which is the bond of Perfectneſs.*

3*dly*; The *Third* and *Laſt great Offence* I ſhall mention, by which the Propagation of true Religion is hindred; is the *vicious* and *debauched Lives*, (not of *Chriſtians*, for That is a Contradiction; but) of thoſe who for Form's ſake *profeſs* themſelves to be ſo. For as the good *Lives* of thoſe who ſtile themſelves the Servants of God, are a *Light ſhining before men*, cauſing them to *glorify the God of Heaven*, and to admire a Religion which is of ſuch great Benefit to Mankind: So, on the contrary, the *vicious and corrupt* Practices of thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians, cannot but raiſe a Prejudice againſt, and caſt a Reproach upon, the Religion which ſeems to have ſo little influence upon the Lives of its Profeſſors. Among thoſe who are *already Believers*, the minds of the Weak are by ſuch ill Examples corrupted, tempted, and emboldened to ſin; being by Degrees made leſs *ſenſible* of the *Danger* of Wickedneſs, and edified *as it were* unto Deſtruction: So St. *Paul* moſt elegantly expreſſes himſelf in the Inſtance of Idolatry; 1 *Cor.* viii, 10; *Shall not the Conſcience of him that is Weak, be* edified, (that is the word in the original, and in the margin of our *Bibles*,) ſhall he not *be* edified, *i. e.* be led on by degrees, *to eat things offered unto Idols?* And by the ſame means, that the *Manners* of Believers are corrupted; Infidels are at the ſame time confirmed in their *Unbelief*, and emboldned to deſpiſe and mock at all Religion. *By this Deed*, ſaid the Prophet *Nathan* to *David*, reproving him for his Adultery and Murder; by This Deed *thou haſt given great occaſion to the Enemies of the Lord to* blaſpheme; 2 *Sam.* xii, 14. And by reaſon of the Wickedneſs of *Eli's* Sons, 'tis recorded that *men* abhorred *the Offering of the Lord*, 1 Sam. ii. 17. And, ſpeaking of the Corruption of the *Jewiſh* Nation; *The Heathen* ſays God by *Ezekiel*, profaned *my holy Name, when they ſaid to them*, Theſe *are the people of the Lord.* Which paſſage of the Prophet, St. *Paul* cites and applies to wicked Chriſtians, *Rom.* ii. 23; *Through breaking the Law, diſhonoureſt thou God? For the Name of God is* blaſphemed *among the Gentiles, through You, as it is written.* And the ſame Argument he urges likewiſe in *other* of his Epiſtles; Exhorting men to the practice of Righteouſneſs and Holineſs, that They of the *contrary* part *may be aſhamed*, and *that the word of God*

ch. xxxvi, 20.

be

be not blaſphemed, Tit. ii; 5; 8. and 1 Tim. vi, 1; *that the Name of God, and his Doctrine, be not blaſphemed.*

To conclude this Head; our Saviour in his Parable, where he compares the End of the World to the Time of Harveſt, deſcribes Iniquity under the Character of an *Offence* or *Scandal*, in the Senſe I am now ſpeaking of; *The Son of Man*, ſaith he, *ſhall ſend forth his Angels, and they ſhall gather out of his kingdom all things that* offend, (in the original it is, *all* Scandals,) *and them which do iniquity*, Matt. xiii. 41.

II. Having thus at large explained what is meant in the Text by the word, *Offences*; I proceed in the *Second* place to conſider in what Senſe our Saviour muſt be underſtood to affirm, that 'tis *impoſſible* but ſuch *Offences* will come; or, as 'tis expreſſed in St. *Matthew*, that it muſt *needs be* that Offences come. And here there have been ſome ſo abſurdly unreaſonable, as to underſtand this of a *proper* and *natural* Neceſſity; as if God had *ordained* that Offences ſhould come, and had accordingly *predeſtinated* particular men to commit them. But This, is directly charging *God* with the Sins of *Men*; and making *Him*, not *themſelves*, the Author of Evil. The plain Meaning of our Saviour, when he affirms it to be *impoſſible* but that Offences *will* come, is This only; that, conſidering the State of the World, the Number of Temptations, the Freedom of mens Will, the Frailty of their Nature, the Perverſeneſs and Obſtinacy of their Affections; it cannot be *expected*, it cannot be *ſuppoſed*, it cannot be *hoped*, but that Offences *will* come; tho' it be very unreaſonable they *ſhould* come. Men *need* not, men *ought* not to *corrupt the doctrine of Chriſt*; they *need* not *diſhonour* their Religion, by unchriſtian *Heats*, *Contentions*, and *Animoſities* among themſelves; much leſs is there any *Neceſſity* that they ſhould *live contrary* to it, by *vicious and debauched Practices*: And yet morally ſpeaking, it *cannot be* but that all theſe things *will* happen. The manner of uſing the like Expreſſions in *other* Places of Scripture, does evidently and beyond Contradiction ſhow This to be the true Senſe of the Words. Thus our Saviour, St. *Mark*. xiii. 7. ſpeaking of Wars and Tumults, *When ye ſhall hear*, ſays he, *of Wars and Rumours of Wars, be ye not troubled*; *For ſuch things muſt* needs *be*: They muſt *needs* be; that is, not that God has laid upon men any *neceſſity* of Quarrelling; but that, from the Wickedneſs of the World, nothing better can be expected. St. *John*, by a like manner of ſpeaking, tells us of *ſome* Perſons ſo far improved in Virtue, that they *cannot* Sin; and St. *Peter*, of others ſo extremely corrupted, that they cannot ceaſe *from Sin*: and our Saviour himſelf, of *Rich* Perſons, for whom, *with* men, that is, *humanely ſpeaking*, it is *impoſſible* to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. All which expreſſions moſt evidently ſignify, not *natural Impoſſibilities*, but *moral Improbabilities* only. To mention but one place more; *It cannot be*, ſays our Lord, St. *Luke* xiii, 33; *it* cannot *be, that a prophet periſh out of Jeruſalem*: His meaning is This only; that *Jeruſalem* was then ſo very wicked and corrupt a place, that it would be a very ſtrange thing, a thing hardly to be imagined, that a Prophet ſhould be ſlain in any *other* City. And thus therefore likewiſe in the Words of the Text, *It is* impoſſible *but that Offences will come*: That is to ſay; In the courſe of a World, wherein, (according to the nature of a Probation-ſtate) *all* men are *free*, and among Them *ſome* are *weak*, and *many will* be *wicked*; it cannot be expected but that Offences *muſt* come. And 'tis *very reaſonable* for the Providence of God to *permit* it ſo to be, for the Trial and Improvement of the Sincere: 1 *Cor.* xi. 19. *There* muſt *be alſo Hereſies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifeſt*: The Meaning is; There *will* be Factions, Parties, and Animoſities, ariſing among worldly and contentious Men from the Love of Power and Dominion: And by Theſe, (by ſuffering Theſe ſometimes to prevail almoſt univerſally, and to exalt themſelves with great Power and Authority in the World,) the Providence of God tries and diſtinguiſhes, *who* are Lovers of the Truth, and Goodneſs, and Meekneſs of the Goſpel, and *who* on the contrary are of worldly, factious, and ambitious Tempers.

1 John. iii. 9.

2 Pet. ii. 14.

Matt. xix. 23.

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III. I propos'd to conſider in the *Third* place, *why* a particular *Wo* is, by way of Emphaſis and Diſtinction, denounced againſt the Perſons *by whom* theſe Offences come: *Wo unto Him*; Wo to That *Man*, or That *Body of Men*, whoſoever or of how great Power ſoever they be, thro' *whom the Offences come*. That *in general*, thoſe who by their ill Behaviour bring reproach upon the Goſpel of Chriſt, are *worthy of Puniſhment*, notwithſtanding the *Neceſſity* of ſuch Offences coming; appears from what has been ſhown under the fore-going Head, *viz.* That the Neceſſity of Offences coming, is not that *God* lays *a neceſſity* upon any Man *to be wicked*, (which would indeed excuſe the *Man*, and transfer the Fault upon *God himſelf*;) but only declares, that Men's voluntary *wickedneſs and corruption* is ſuch, that it *cannot be expected* but Offences *will* come. We have an extraordinary inſtance of This kind, in the caſe of *Judas*: God *decreed* that the Son of Man ſhould be betrayed to Death; and accordingly *foretold* by the Prophets, that One of his Followers ſhould betray him. Yet God did not predeſtinate *Judas* to be *wicked*: But Chriſt, in order to accompliſh the Will of God, choſe on purpoſe one ſuch Diſciple whoſe Heart he knew was *wicked*, and gave him (as might have been given to any *other* wicked Man) an *opportunity* to betray him. Thus both the Will of God was accompliſhed in the Death of Chriſt; and yet *Judas*, like other wicked Men, acted merely from the Wickedneſs of his own Heart, and therefore had no Excuſe for his Crime: *Matt.* xxvi. 24. *The Son of man goeth, as it is written of him; but Wo unto that man by Whom the Son of man is betrayed; it had been good for that man, if he had not been born.* The *expreſſion* is of the *ſame* kind, and the *manner of arguing* the *ſame*, as in the words of the Text; *It is impoſſible but that Offences will come, but Wo unto Him through whom they come; It were better for him that a milſtone were hanged about his neck, and he caſt into the Sea*; that is, better were it for him, that he had never been born, or that he had quickly periſhed by ſome untimely Death. Thus it appears plainly *in general*, that the *Neceſſity* here mentioned of Offences coming, is *no Excuſe* for thoſe, by whoſe Wickedneſs they come.

But then further, the reaſon why a *particular* Wo, by way of *Emphaſis and Diſtinction*, is denounced againſt the Perſons, *by whom* the Offences here ſpoken of ariſe; is becauſe they are Offences of an *extenſive* Nature; Hindrances to the propagation of the Goſpel; Sins, not only in the Perſons who immediately commit them, but *Stumbling-blocks* cauſing *Others* to ſin likewiſe, and promoting in general the Cauſe of Satan. Now if *they who turn many to righteouſneſs, ſhall ſhine* (as the Scripture aſſures us,) with a diſtinguiſhed Glory *as the Stars for ever and ever*; and *he that converteth a Sinner from the Errour of his Way, ſhall hide a multitude of Sins*: for the ſame Reaſon, they who by *corrupt Practices*, or by *abſurd and unreaſonable Doctrines*, (contrary to the expreſs Command of our Saviour, *Call no man Father upon Earth, for One is your Father which is in Heaven*; and *be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Maſter, even Chriſt*: They, I ſay, who by introducing Doctrines upon the Authority of *men*, contrary to this expreſs Command of Chriſt,) deter Men from believing the Goſpel and prevent them from coming into the Way of righteouſneſs; deſerve juſtly in proportion a *greater Condemnation*.

IV. The *Inferences* I ſhall draw from what has been ſaid, are:

1ſt, From the explication which has been given of theſe words of our Saviour, *It is* impoſſible *but that Offences will come*; we may learn, not to charge God with Evil; nor to aſcribe to any Degree of His, the Wickedneſs and Impieties of Men. And whenever any Text of Scripture may poſſibly in the literal Senſe to a careleſs Reader ſeem to give countenance to any ſuch Notion, we muſt always be careful to compare with it *other* Expreſſions of the like Nature, which will be found in other *parallel* places of Scripture; and then the true Senſe of Both, will eaſily appear, even to a mean Underſtanding.

2dly, Since our Saviour has forewarned us, that it *muſt needs be* that ſuch Offences will come, as may prove Stumbling-blocks to the weak and unattentive; let us take care, ſince we have received this Warning, not to ſtumble or be offended

fended at them. Let us not, becauſe Chriſtians (as they call themſelves) *will* lead wicked lives, and *will* be contentious for dominion over each other's Faith, and *will* introduce blind, corrupt, and unintelligible Doctrines; let us not, I ſay, upon any of *theſe* Accounts, which our Saviour has ſo plainly forewarned us of; let us not think at all the worſe of *Chriſtianity itſelf*, of the *true*, the *plain*, the *peaceable*, the univerſally *charitable* and *beneficent* Doctrine of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. SERM. XVIII.

3*dly*, And above all; As we ought not to *take*, ſo much more ought we to be careful that we never *give*, any of theſe Offences. Let not any of them who call themſelves Chriſtians, live *vicious and debauched Lives*. Let us not ſow *Diviſions*, by endeavouring to *impoſe* upon each Other in matters of Faith, and by *lording it* (as the Apoſtle expreſſes himſelf) *over the heritage of God*. Let us not, by departing from the unerring Rules of *Reaſon* and *Scripture*, corrupt the plain and beautiful Doctrine of Chriſt; but endeavour always to keep it in that *original Simplicity*, wherein he himſelf has delivered it in ſuch a manner, as to be level to the capacity even of the meaneſt Underſtandings. Nay, let us *not only* not *give* any of theſe Offences, but let us by all poſſible means endeavour diligently to *prevent* them. Our Saviour exhorts us, in the words immediately following the Text, as they are recorded in St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel, ch. xviii. 8; *If thy Hand offend thee, cut it off; and if thine Eye offend thee, pluck it out:* that is, (as appears from the connexion of theſe words with thoſe of the Text;) how great worldly Temptations ſoever, any *Man* or any *Body of Men* may have, to do any thing which will offend or hinder Others from embracing the Goſpel; yet do it not. Abſtain, (not indeed from any thing which is *neceſſary* in order to preſerve either the *Truth and Simplicity of the Goſpel*, or the *Practice of Righteouſneſs*; but abſtain,) both from impoſing and from practiſing, even things *innocent and indifferent*, if doing otherwiſe will accidentally be a prejudice to true Religion: *Rom.* xiv. 21; *It is good, neither to eat fleſh nor to drink wine*, (much leſs to inſiſt on any needleſs Doctrine or Ceremony,) *nor any thing whereby thy Brother ſtumbleth or is offended, or is made Weak.* For my own part, ſays St. *Paul, if meat make my Brother to offend, I will eat no Fleſh while the World ſtandeth, rather than make my Brother offend.* To conclude: *Provide things honeſt*, ſays the ſame Apoſtle, *in the Sight of all men.* Have *a good Report from them that are without*, that is, even from Unbelievers themſelves. In a word; *Give no offence*, ſays he, *neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.*

SERMON XIX.

Againſt Perſecution for Religion.

LUKE. xiv. 23.

And the Lord ſaid unto the Servant, Go out into the High-ways and Hedges, and compel *them to come in, that my Houſe may be filled.*

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MY Deſign in the following Diſcourſe, is *1ſt* to explain diſtinctly the *true* Meaning of theſe Words of our Saviour; and *2dly* to ſhow, to what an *impious* Senſe they have ſometimes been perverted, by men of corrupt and ambitious minds in the *Romiſh* Church.

I. *Firſt*; Our Saviour, in This Parable, compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a *King making a Marriage-feaſt for his Son*; To which the Gueſts *firſt invited*, were the *Jews*, God's original peculiar People, to whom the Goſpel was *firſt* preached: But They, upon ſundry trivial Excuſes, refuſing to come to the Feaſt; and going careleſsly elſewhere, one to his Farm, another to his Merchandize; that is, the *Jews* adhering to the vain Traditions of their Elders, and refuſing to embrace the Doctrine of the Goſpel; *The maſter*, thereupon *being angry, ſaid to his ſervant*, ver. 21; *Go out into the ſtreets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor and the maimed, and the lame and the blind*; That is, as our Saviour elſewhere explains it, *Verily the* Publicans *and the* harlots *go into the Kingdom of God before* you; For *the Publicans juſtified* God

Matt. xxii. 2.

Luke xiv. 16.

Matt. xxi. 31.

God, Luke vii, 29, that is, obeyed God's invitation to Repentance; *But the Phariſees and Lawyers rejected the counſel of God againſt themſelves.* After this there being *ſtill* room, *the Lord ſaid unto the ſervant*, in the words of the Text, *Go out into the High-ways and Hedges, and* compel *them to come in, that my houſe may be filled: Go*, not only into the ſtreets and lanes of the City; but alſo *out of* the City, *into the high-ways and hedges*; that is, go even among the *Gentiles*, Aliens from the Commonwealth of *Iſrael*, ſtrangers as yet to the Covenant of Promiſe, and invite *Them* to come in: According to That explication given by our Saviour in another place, *Many ſhall come from the Eaſt and from the Weſt, and ſhall ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of God, and the children of the Kingdom ſhall be ſhut out.* Go, and *compel* them to come in; that is, not by *Force of Arms*, but by the force of *Perſwaſion* and earneſt *Entreaty*: For ſo in this very parable, recorded by St. *Matthew*; the words which we find *here*, compel *them to come in*; are *there*, only *go into the high-ways, and* bid *them to the marriage.* The word *compel*, is *more emphatical*; expreſſing very affectionately the *greatneſs* of God's *Goodneſs*, or his *earneſt and ſincere Deſire* of Men's Salvation. And becauſe in This place, it is, by the Nature and Circumſtances of the whole Diſcourſe, an Expreſſion of ſuch *Goodneſs* only, and not of *Severity*; an invitation of men to a *Feaſt*, and not a dragging them to *Puniſhment*; This therefore evidently ſhows, what *ſort* of Compulſion it is, that muſt here be underſtood to be meant. For there are many ways of *Compelling*, in the figurative and moral Senſe, very different from Compulſion by *Force of Arms*. *Perſwaſion* and *Arguments*, compel men; *Importunity* and *Earneſtneſs*, compel; *Promiſes* and *Threatnings*, *Hopes* and *Fears*, compel; *Kindneſs* and *Gratitude*, have a compulſive Force; and *Reaſons ſtrong and clear*, though they offer *no violence*, are yet, in the *moral* Senſe, to underſtanding and unprejudiced Perſons, *irreſiſtible*. And in the *Scripture*, as well as in *common-ſpeech*, is the word, *compelling*, very frequently thus uſed. Men are in the ſacred Writings ſaid to be *compelled*, ſometimes by *importunity*: *Gen.* xxxiii. 11. *Jacob* urged *Eſau*, (in the original it is, he *forced* him,) to receive his preſent, and he received it: 1 *Sam.* xxviii, 23. Saul's *ſervants, with the woman*, compelled *him*, (that is, prevailed with him by their importunity,) *and he hearkned to their Voice, and did eat*: 2 *Kings* iv. 8; *The Shunamite* conſtrained *Eliſha*, (in the *Hebrew* it is, *compelled him*,) *to eat bread.* So likewiſe in the *New Teſtament*, *Matt.* xiv. 22; *Jeſus* conſtrained *his Diſciples*, (in the original it is the very ſame word with that in the Text, he *compelled* them,) *to get into a ſhip. Luke* xxiv. 29; When Jeſus *made as though he would have gone further*, the Diſciples *conſtrained him*, (in the *Greek* it is, *forced* him; that is, not by *violence*, but by *perſwaſion* they forced him,) to *go in and tarry with them.* And *Acts* xvi. 15, the woman *conſtrained* us to go into her houſe; It is again, in the original, the ſame word, *forced* them; which yet is directly explained in the very ſame Verſe, to have been done only by her importunity in *beſeeching* them. In *other* places, *Diligence and Induſtry* is repreſented as a ſort of *Compulſion*; Matt. xi. 12; *From the days of John the Baptiſt until Now, the Kingdom of Heaven ſuffereth* Violence, *and the* Violent *take it by* Force: The Meaning is, what St. *Luke* expreſſes in the parallel place, *ch.* xvi. 16; *The Law and the Prophets were until John; Since that time, the Kingdom of God is preached, and every man* preſſeth *into it*; that is, the Goſpel is now preached *publickly* and *univerſally*; and even the *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*, are *diligent* to underſtand and receive it. Sometimes *neceſſary* buſineſs is deſcribed as *compelling* men; that is, *ſuch* buſineſs, as either they *cannot*, or fancy *they cannot*, without great inconvenience, neglect. Thus in this very Parable, in the words juſt before the Text, one of the Gueſts firſt invited is introduced making This Excuſe, *I have bought a piece of ground, and I muſt* needs *go and ſee it*; In the Original it is the very ſame word, as in the Text itſelf, I am *compelled* to go and ſee it. And another anſwers immediately after; *I have married a wife, and therefore I* cannot (the *Greek* is, *I am not* able to) *come.* In *ſome* places, men are ſaid to be *compelled*, by having an *earneſt* deſire *of mind* to do a thing; *Job* xxxii. 18; *I am* full *of matter, the Spirit within*

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Matt. viii. 11.

Mat. xxii. 9.

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within me conſtraineth *me*: And in *other* places, they are compelled by *Fear and* Diſtreſs *of mind*; 1 *Sam.* xiii. 12. *Saul*; being in diſtreſs, forced *himſelf therefore*, contrary to his duty, *and offered a burnt-offering*. Sometimes ſtrong and unanſwerable *Reaſons*, compel Men: *Job.* vi. 25. How forcible *are right words*! Sometimes, a *Senſe of* Duty, compels Men as it were *againſt* their own Inclination: 1 *Pet.* v. 2; *Feed the flock of God, not by* conſtraint, *but willingly*; And 2 *Cor.* ix. 7; give, not as of *neceſſity*, but *cheerfully*. At *other* Times, men are repreſented in Scripture, as *compelled* by *fair and deceitful ſpeeches*; Prov. vii. 21; *With much fair Speech ſhe cauſed him to yield, with the flattering of her Lips ſhe* forced *him*. Or by *Errour, and the Prevalency of a falſe Opinion or Doctrine:* Gal. vi. 12; *As many as deſire to make a fair ſhew in the Fleſh, they* conſtrain *you*, (here again the original has the very *ſame* word, as in my Text; they compel you) *to be circumciſed, only leſt they ſhould ſuffer Perſecution for the Croſs of Chriſt*: And *Gal.* ii. 14; *Why* compelleſt *thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?* namely, by *perſwading* them of the Neceſſity of Circumciſion? Or, by the *Perverſeneſs of* Others, men are ſometimes ſaid to be *compelled*, for the conviction of ſuch gainſayers, to do things which they would otherwiſe diſlike: *Gal.* ii. 3; *Neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was* compelled *to be circumciſed*; *And That becauſe of falſe Brethren, unawares brought in,——to ſpie out our Liberty*; And 2 *Cor.* xii. 11; *I am become a Fool in glorying*, ye *have* compelled *me*, *viz.* by your ill behaviour. Or, by mere *Cuſtom* ſometimes, are men repreſented as compelled: *Luke* xxiii. 17. *Of* neceſſity *he muſt releaſe One to them at the Feaſt*; that is, as St. *Matthew* expreſſes it in the parallel xxvii. 15. xviii. 39. place, *he was* wont *to releaſe One* at That Time; or, in St. *John*'s words, *they had a* Cuſtom, *that One ſhould then be releaſed*. Laſtly, by the *willing* and *agreeable* compulſion, of *Love and Gratitude* powerfully working, in the Motions of a free and generous Mind; are Men elegantly ſaid to be *compelled*: 2 Cor. v. 14; *The* Love *of Chriſt*, conſtrained *us*. And not of *Men* only, but even concerning *God himſelf* alſo, is the like figure of ſpeaking ſometimes uſed in Scripture: *Iſ.* lxii. 7; *Ye that make mention of the Lord, give him* No Reſt, *till he eſtabliſh, and till he make Jeruſalem a Praiſe in the Earth*. Here the holy Spirit repreſents God, in a moſt wonderful way of condeſcenſion, ſuffering himſelf to be *compelled* as it were, by the *importunate* Prayers of good Men. And the ſame thing is ſtill more lively ſet forth, in the Hiſtory of *Jacob*'s ſtriving with the Angel, *Gen.* xxxii. 24; where our Tranſlation improperly expreſſes it by his *wreſtling* with the Angel; But the Senſe is; the Angel made as if he would have departed from him; but *Jacob* held him, and ſtrove with him, and preſſed him *importunately* for a Bleſſing, ſaying, *I will not let thee go, except thou bleſs me*; Whereupon he bleſſed him, and ſaid, ver. 28; *As a* Prince *haſt thou Power with God and with Men, and haſt prevailed*. Which matter, the prophet *Hoſea* thus ſets forth, ch. xii. 3; *By his Strength he had Power with God; yea, he had Power over the Angel, and prevailed; he* wept, *and made ſupplication unto him:* The *Strength* (ſays the Prophet,) by which *Jacob prevailed over the Angel*, was his *weeping and making ſupplication unto him*. From Theſe, and numerous other the like Expreſſions in Scripture, as well as from the Nature and Reaſon of the Thing itſelf, it is evident beyond controverſy, that when our Lord in the Text, bids the Preachers of his Goſpel, go into the highways and hedges and *compel* Men to come in; his meaning is not, *Compel them by Force of Arms*; but, compel them by irreſiſtible Clearneſs of Reaſon, by Strength of Argument, and affectionate Admonition; convince, perſwade, intreat them; ſet before them the Certainty of a Future Judgment, the Promiſes, and the Threatnings of the Lord; prevail with them by your own good Example; urge, preſs, inculcate upon them the Neceſſity of Religion; *Preach* 2 Tim. iv. 2. *the word, be inſtant in Seaſon, out of Seaſon; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-ſuffering and doctrine:* According to That of St. *Paul*, 1 Th. ii. 10; *Ye are witneſſes,——how holily, and juſtly, and unblameably, we behaved ourſelves among you; As you know alſo, how we* exhorted *and* comforted, *and* charged *every one of you, as a Father doth his children; that ye would walk worthy of God who has called you*

unto

unto his Kingdom and Glory. This is evidently the *true* and *full* Meaning of theſe remarkable words of our Saviour in the Text. It remains that I proceed now in the II. *Second* place to ſhow, to what a wicked Senſe they have ſometimes been perverted, by Men of corrupt and ambitious Minds in the *Romiſh* Church. Compel *them to come in*: That is, (in *Their* explication,) *compel them by Violence and Force of Arms*, by racks and tortures, by Dragoons and Inquiſitions, by Fire and Sword. As if the Religion of Chriſt was intended to diveſt Men of common Humanity, and the Service and Glory of God could really be promoted by the Deſtruction of Mankind: As if Religion, whoſe Great End is Peace and Love, the univerſal Reconciliation of Men to God and to each other, could itſelf be propagated by the higheſt Oppreſſions, and moſt inhumane Cruelties: and be made to authorize and to ſanctify ſuch Practices, the preventing whereof is indeed the very chief Deſign of All Religion both Natural and Revealed. But to be more particular. SERM. XIX.

1ſt; It is originally, in the very *nature of things*, inconſiſtent and abſurd, to think that a right Senſe of Religion can be put into Mens Minds by Force of Arms. For *What* is Religion, but ſuch a Perſwaſion of Mind towards God, as produces Obedience to his Commands; ariſing from a due *Senſe* of him in the *Underſtanding*, a juſt *Fear and Love* of him in the *Affections*, and a *Choice or Preference* of Virtue in the *Will*? Now to attempt to influence the *Will*, by *Force*; is like applying *Sounds* to the *Eyes* in order to be *Seen*, or *Colours* to the *Ears* in order to be *Heard*. The Abſurdity, in Both Caſes, is exactly the Same; For as nothing affects the *Eyes*, but *Light*; nor the *Ears*, but *Sounds*; ſo nothing affects the *Underſtanding* and the *Will*, but *Reaſon and Perſwaſion*. A Man's *external* Acts, *may* indeed be *compelled*, or may be *reſtrained*, by *Force*; And, in many Caſes, it is very *fit* they ſhould be ſo: But the *inward* Acts of the Mind, *cannot* be forced; nor is it poſſible for a Man to be *compelled*, *againſt* his Will, to fear God, and be ſincerely religious. A Robber or Murderer *may* and *ought* to be, reſtrained by Force, from killing or pillaging his Brother; And this is the very End, for which Providence appointed Magiſtracy and Government in the World: But the Man is not therefore at all the more religious in the Sight of *God*, becauſe his hands are in Chains. It is the *Heart* properly, that is the Seat of Religion; and where *That* concurs not, the *outward action* is of no conſideration in the Sight of God. What is it then, that Men can be compelled to by Force, in matters of Religion? Nothing but *Hypocriſy*, nothing but a *Mocking of God*. That which *our Saviour in the Text* would have Men compelled to, is a *good Heart*, and a *ſincere Mind*; and therefore the compulſion here ſpoken of, muſt needs be that which compels, not the *Body*, but the *Mind*; And This, it is evident, can be no other, than *ſtrong Reaſon* and *powerful Perſwaſion*; Meekneſs, and Charity, and good Example. For which Reaſon, when the Gueſts were all come in, who are here by our Lord ſaid (in this Senſe) to have been *compelled* to the Feaſt; yet the Man who had not on the Wedding-garment of righteouſneſs, was not *forced* to *put one on*, but was caſt out into outer-darkneſs for coming in *without one*. God himſelf, whoſe Power is infinite, yet *compels* and over-rules no Man in matters of Morality: He invites, he exhorts, he intreats; But if they will not be *drawn by theſe Cords of a Man*, theſe proper Motives to rational Creatures; then, *He that is unjuſt*, ſaith he, *let him be unjuſt ſtill*; *and he that is filthy, let him be filthy ſtill*; And, *He that heareth, let him hear*; *and he that forbeareth, let him forbear*: His *Spirit will not ſtrive with them*, by any other than rational and moral Motives; by which if they *will not* be led to obey him, then he *gives them up unto their own Heart's Luſt, and lets them follow their own imagination*. All our Saviour's Preaching, was with This Declaration; *He that has Ears to hear*, let *him hear*; and St. *Paul* in like manner, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 38; *If any man be ignorant*, (after all reaſonable means of Inſtruction,) let *him be ignorant*. Nay indeed, to ſuppoſe that even the Power of God, *can* compel Men in moral Matters; is a manifeſt inconſiſtency in the Nature of the Thing. For the *eſſence* of Religion or Virtue conſiſts in the *free choice* of the Will; So that to *compel* a Man in *this caſe*, by

Rev. xxii. 11. Ezek. iii. 27. Gen. vi. 3. Pſ. lxxxi. 12. 1 Cor. xiv. 38.

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by taking away his freedom; is indeed *deſtroying* the *Faculty itſelf*, or *removing* the *Subject*, in which Virtue was to reſide. Wherefore the utmoſt that the Scripture ever repreſents God doing in this matter, is what is expreſſed, *Pſ.* lxxxi. 13; *O that my people* would *have hearkened unto me! that Iſrael had walked in my Ways!* and *Iſ.* v. 4; *What* could *have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done in it?* But

2*dly*, As *Force* is *inconſiſtent* with the nature of *Religion* in *general*; ſo is it much *more* oppoſite, to the Spirit of *Chriſtianity* in *particular*. Our *Saviour's whole* Life and Character was, that *he went about, doing good*; humble and lowly, meek and merciful, and *exhorting* Sinners to Repentance; till at laſt he was led, as a *Lamb*, to the Slaughter. *If ye* will *be my Diſciples*, *If any man* will *come after me*, was his ſtile in *inviting* Men to receive the Goſpel; Will *ye alſo go away*, was his manner of *expoſtulation*: *Bleſſed are the* meek, *Bleſſed are the* merciful, *Bleſſed are they which* are perſecuted, (not they which *perſecute*;) was his conſtant *Doctrine*: A *New*, a *particular*, a diſtinguiſhing *Commandment*, *give I unto you*; *Love* one another, *love even your* Enemies, *love even your* Perſecutors: *By* This *ſhall all men know that ye are my Diſciples*, *if ye have* love *one to another*: To *love* God *with all your Heart*, *and your* Neighbours *as your ſelves*, theſe are *the firſt and* great *Commandments*; And if any Man deſires to diſtinguiſh the Preachers of *Truth* from the Teachers of *Errour*, by theſe *Fruits* (ſaith he) *ſhall ye know them*: Laſtly, when ſome of his Diſciples, with too high a Spirit of Zeal, would have *called for fire from heaven*, upon the *Samaritans* who contemptuouſly rejected their Maſter; though they were far from maſſacring them with their own Hands, and deſired only to have the *unerring* righteous Judgment of *God* executed upon them, yet *he reproved them*, *ſaying*, *ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of*; *for the Son of Man came not to deſtroy mens Lives, but to ſave them.* Accordingly, in the firſt and uncorrupt Ages, *ſuch* alſo was the Manner of the *Apoſtles* teaching, in imitation of their Maſter: *Hereby know we*, ſaith St. *John*, *that we are in Him*; *If a man ſay*, *I love God*, *and hateth his Brother*, *he is a Liar*; *for he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath ſeen*, *how can he love God whom he hath not ſeen?* And St. *James*: *Who*, ſays he, *is a wiſe man? Let him ſhew his Works with* meekneſs *of Wiſdom*: *But if ye have bitter envyings and ſtriſe in your hearts*, *glory not*, *and lie not againſt the Truth*: *For This wiſdom deſcendeth not from above*, *but is earthly*, *ſenſual*, *deviliſh*: *But the Wiſdom that is from above*, *is firſt pure*, *then peaceable*, *gentle*, *and eaſy to be intreated*, *full of mercy and good Fruits*: For, *the* Wrath *of Man*, (and, much *more*, the *Cruelty* of Man,) *worketh not the righteouſneſs of God.* St. *Paul* likewiſe, though in his natural Temper the moſt zealous of all the Apoſtles, yet declares, that the very End *of the Commandment*, *is Charity*; that though a Man ſhould ſpeak *with the* Tongues *of Men and Angels*, and had Faith *to remove Mountains*, and Zeal *to give his body to be burned*, and Liberality *to beſtow all his goods to feed the Poor*, and *had not Charity*; that is, univerſal Love, Temper, and Good-will towards Mankind; it would *profit him nothing.* And accordingly he exhorts Chriſtians, to put on *bowels of mercy*, *kindneſs*, *meekneſs*; *forbearing one another*, *and forgiving one another*, *if any man have a quarrel againſt any*; *And above all things put on* Charity, *which is the bond of Perfectneſs*, Col. iii. 12. Charity, the Bond of Perfectneſs; That is; Not Unity of Opinion in the Bond of Ignorance, or Unity of Practice in the Bond of Hypocriſy, but Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace. And, with regard to *Unbelievers*, 2 Tim. ii. 24, *The Servant of the Lord*, ſays he, *muſt not ſtrive*, *but be gentle unto all men*, *apt to teach*, *patient*, *in* meekneſs (not with Fire and Sword) *inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the Truth.* Particularly, in the Caſe of an unbelieving *Wife*, he commands the Husband not to try to bring her over by ill uſage and force, but by *kindneſs only* and good example; for *what knoweſt thou*, *O man*, *whether thou ſhalt ſave thy Wife?* 1 Cor. vii. 16: And Husbands *that obey not the word*, 1 Pet. iii. 1, *may alſo without the word be won by the converſation* and good example *of the Wives*, *while they behold your chaſte converſation coupled with Fear.*

Luke ix. 55.

1 Joh. ii. 5. iv. 20.

Jam. iii. 13.

ch. i. 20.

1 Tim. i. 5. 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

Did

Did the Profeſſors of Chriſtianity univerſally follow theſe Precepts of their Maſter and his Apoſtles, ſo that the *Labourers* were as *many* as the *Harveſt* is *great*; the whole World would ſoon be *filled with the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea*: And the *Goſpel*, from a *grain of muſtard-ſeed*, according to our Saviour's Parable, would have waxed into a great Tree; which (in the Pſalmiſt's Expreſſion) *having taken deep root, had filled the Land*; *The Hills were covered with the Shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedar-trees*; *She ſtretched out her branches unto the Sea, and her boughs unto the river*: Or in the Prophet *Daniel*'s Phraſe, ch. iv. 11; *The Tree grew and was ſtrong, and the height thereof reached unto Heaven, and the Sight thereof to the End of all the Earth*; *The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit much*; *and in it was Meat for all*; *The Beaſts of the Field had ſhadow under it, and the Fowls of the Heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all Fleſh was fed of it.* Thus would the Goſpel certainly be propagated, did its Profeſſors every where promote it according to their Maſter's Direction, and practiſe it in the Love thereof. But if the Goſpel of Peace, be *itſelf* turned into an occaſion of hatred and violences; *the name of God* muſt needs *be blaſphemed among the Gentiles, through Us, as it is written*, Rom. ii. 24; If the *Salt itſelf has loſt its Savour, wherewith ſhall things be ſeaſoned?* If the *Eye*, which is the *Light* of the Body, be *itſelf* Confuſion; *wherewith* ſhall a man's ſteps be directed? *If the very* Light *that is in thee, be darkneſs*, (as our Saviour expreſſes it;) *how great is that Darkneſs?* If a man's *Religion itſelf* be *wickedneſs*, how *great* muſt his Wickedneſs be?

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Pſ. lxxx. 9.

Mat. v. 13. Mark ix. 50. Mat. vi. 22. Job x. 22.

3*dly*, As *Force* is inconſiſtent with the Nature of *Religion in general*, and ſtill *more* oppoſite to the Spirit of *Chriſtianity in particular*; ſo it is in Scripture, ſtill *further* made the *diſtinguiſhing character of the great Apoſtacy* foretold by Chriſt and his Apoſtles. As, in the *literal Babylon*, *Nebuchadnezzar* commanded, that whoſoever would not worſhip the King's golden Image, ſhould be caſt into the fiery furnace; ſo the deſcription of *Spiritual Babylon* is This, that *whoſoever will not worſhip the Beaſt's Image*, that is, profeſs the idolatrous Religion of falſe Chriſtians, *ſhall be killed*: Rev. xiii. 15. Our Saviour foretold his Diſciples from the *Beginning*, that *he came not to ſend Peace on the Earth, but Fire* and *a Sword*; that *the Brother ſhould deliver up the Brother to death, and the Father the Child*; *yea, the time cometh*, ſaith he, *that whoſoever* killeth *you, will think that he doth* God *Service*; *And theſe things will they do, becauſe they have neither known* Me, *nor my* Father *that ſent me*; that is have neither underſtood the Doctrine of *Chriſt*, nor the Precepts of *natural Religion* itſelf. Theſe Prophecies began in *ſome degree* to be accompliſhed, by the *Jews* perſecuting the Apoſtles of our Lord: But the *Jews* were ſo far outdone in this Wickedneſs, by corrupt *Chriſtians* afterwards; that in like manner as our Saviour teſtified concerning the *worſt* Age of the *Jews*, that the *blood of all the Prophets which was ſhed from the foundation of the world, even from the blood of righteous Abel, down to the blood of Zacharias, ſhould be required of That generation*; ſo concerning the moſt corrupt and perſecuting part of the *Chriſtian* Church, it is propheſied likewiſe, that *in Her* ſhall be *found the blood of Prophets and of Saints, and of All that are ſlain upon the Earth.* It is very obſervable; that as *Moſes*, in the Concluſion of the *Law*, foretold ſuch a Diſperſion of the *Jews* into All Nations, as no *Falſe* Prophet *could* have invented, becauſe it is ſuch a thing as never happened to any *other* People, and is therefore a great Evidence of the Truth of *Moſes*'s Inſpiration: So in the *New Teſtament* there is clearly foretold ſuch a Corruption of *Chriſtianity* ſo *unnatural*, ſo *incredible*, as could not have entered into the reach of any *humane* Wiſdom to foreſee or ſuſpect: That the Profeſſors of *that religion*, whoſe diſtinguiſhing *Character*, whoſe very *Eſſence*, is univerſal *Love* and Good-will towards Mankind; ſhould ſome of them exceed, in *Cruelty*, even the moſt *barbarous* of the Heathens: That, in order to convert *Others*, they ſhould *themſelves* break the *greateſt* of God's Commandments; and overturn *all his Laws*, for the Propagation (it ſeems) of his *Religion*: That Chriſtianity, inſtead of making men Partakers of the *Divine* Nature, ſhould on the contrary become ſo corrupt, as to diveſt them

Mat. x. 21. 34. John xvi. 2, 3, *and* xv. 21. Luke xi. 50. Rev. xvii. 6. xviii. 24. Deut. xxviii. 64.

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of all Remains even of *Humanity itſelf:* That, inſtead of cauſing the *Sun* of Righteouſneſs to ariſe in men's hearts, it ſhould on the contrary extinguiſh That *Candle* of the Lord, which was *before* in their breaſts by the Light of Nature; and make them even *ten times more the children of Wrath, than* if they had never received the Goſpel at all, nor ever heard of *the way of Righteouſneſs.*

It will here, no doubt, be alledged, by thoſe of the *Romiſh* Church, that *Proteſtants* alſo, have ſometimes *perſecuted* men, upon account of Religion: Which perhaps *may* indeed be True, juſt in the *ſame* ſenſe, as *good men* may be ſaid to have ſometimes committed Robberies, or Murder, or other Crimes; that is, they have, in *ſo* doing, apoſtatized from their Profeſſion. But *muſt* men then, (they will ſay,) be left *wholly at liberty* whether they will be religious or not? No certainly: We muſt exhort, convince, reprove, *be inſtant with them, in ſeaſon, out of ſeaſon*; ſetting before them, without ceaſing, the Promiſes and the Terrours of the Lord. But *what* if all theſe things will not prevail with them? Why, then (our Saviour tells us) they muſt be unto us *as heathen-men and publicans*; that is, we muſt leave them to the righteous judgment of God. But muſt not the *Magiſtrate* then *puniſh* the Obſtinate? Undoubtedly he muſt; that is, he muſt puniſh them for every Action which is *vicious and immoral*; and conſequently *hurtful* to the *Publick*, which has a right of Self-defence againſt all Malefactors. But to abuſe the *Sword of Juſtice*, to an *unjuſt Compulſion* in matters relating wholly to God and mens own Conſciences; this is the *Great Corruption* propheſied of in the whole *New-Teſtament.*

Laſtly, It may be alledged by the Church of *Rome*, that there are in *Scripture* approved Inſtances of men *put to death* upon account of Religion: But the plain Anſwer is, that the Caſes there mentioned, are All of them *exceeding different*, from Thoſe which They are by Popiſh Writers brought to excuſe. In the Law of *Moſes*, he that ſeduced men to worſhip other Gods, was commanded to be put to death: Becauſe he ſeduced men to worſhip Stocks and Stones, the Gods of thoſe abominable Nations whom the Lord had commanded to be extirpated; a Crime equally againſt all Natural, and all Revealed Religion; which no man's Conſcience could innocently or erroneouſly lead him into; and the Puniſhment moreover was grounded upon, and juſtified only by, the *particular expreſs* Command, given by God at That time to the *Jews*, under a ſevere Law, and under a *political Theocracy* even with reſpect to their *Civil* Government; and was therefore a Caſe, not to be imitated, but when exactly under *all* the *like Circumſtances*, and with the *like* particular *expreſs* Command from God. *Elijah* deſtroyed Men with Fire from Heaven: But it was God's own Miraculous Interpoſition, and not any Action of the Prophet, that killed them. He ſlew alſo at another time the Prophets of *Baal:* But it was upon an expreſs Command of God, warranted and proved to him by an immediate *Miracle* of Fire from Heaven upon his Burnt-Offering. *Phineas* ſuddenly killed a Man and a Woman in their Sin: But the Text tells us, it was according to a *ſpecial Command* given to *Moſes* upon That very Occaſion: And he that will do the like, muſt ſhow the like *Inſpiration* and the like *Command. Ananias* and *Sapphira* fell down dead at the Apoſtle's feet; but it was by the Miraculous Judgment of *God*, not by any Action of the *Apoſtles themſelves.* He that, from theſe Inſtances, thinks he may *kill* all Men that differ from him in Religion; will bring in all Enthuſiaſm and all Wickedneſs into the World. Can *Chriſtians* ſhow, that *they* have any ſuch Command? have they not the very *contrary* declared to them, in our Saviour's telling his Diſciples, when they wiſhed for Fire from Heaven, that they *knew not what Spirit they were of.* There is not therefore, in all the Prophecies through the whole Scripture, any *One* more certain Mark of Antichriſtian Corruption, than the Spirit of *Perſecution*: *Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her Sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*

SERMON

SERMON XX.

Against false Pretences to Religion.

MATT. xxii. 11, 12.

And when the King came in to see the Guests, he saw there a Man which had not on a Wedding-garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a Wedding-garment; and he was Speechless.

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THESE Words are part of the conclusion of a Parable, in which our Lord represents the *Kingdom of Heaven*, or God's gracious Declarations to Mankind in the *Gospel*, under the Similitude of a King sending forth his Servants at different Times, and inviting his Subjects to the *Marriage-Feast* of his Son. Not only by the Light of *Nature* and *Reason*, has God given Men the Knowledge of *Himself*, a Sense of the essential and eternal Differences of *Good and Evil*, a necessary and unavoidable Expectation of a *Future Judgment*, and of *Rewards and Punishments* in a *life to come*; but moreover by *Revelation* also, at *sundry times* and in *divers manners*, to the *Patriarchs* and the *Prophets*; and at last by the Preaching of *Christ himself*, and of his *Apostles and Ministers* sent forth even unto the Ends of the World; has he continually *repeated* his *Admonitions*; and

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without ceaſing *invites, perſwades, urges, preſſes* Men, with all the *poſſible* Arguments both of *Reaſon* and *Authority*, to accept the Gracious and Neceſſary Terms of Salvation. The *inſenſibility* of Men, in not underſtanding their true Happineſs; their *Negligence*, in refuſing to receive inſtruction in the ways of Virtue; and their *Perverſeneſs* in preferring the momentary Pleaſures of Sin, before the Happineſs of Eternity; is affectionately ſet forth by our Saviour in *That part* of the Parable, where he deſcribes the Temper and Diſpoſition of the Perſons invited to the Wedding, ver. 3, *and* 5, that they would not *come*, but *made light of* the Invitation, *and went their ways, one to his Farm, another to his Merchandize.* The *Goodneſs* and *Long-ſuffering* of *God*, in bearing patiently with Sinners, and giving them ſpace for Repentance, and exhorting them with all earneſtneſs to flee from the Wrath to come; is, in a very lively manner, expreſſed in the *following part* of the Parable, ver. 9; where the King ſays to his Servants, after they who had been before invited refuſed to come; *Go ye into the high-ways, and as many as ye ſhall find, bid to the Wedding:* Or, as St. *Luke* expreſſes it ſtill more pathetically, *Go out into the Streets and Lanes of the City——go out into the High-ways and Hedges, and* compel *them to come in, that my houſe may be filled*: *Compel* them; that is, be *preſſing*, be very *urgent* with them, uſe *all poſſible* Arguments of Perſwaſion, give them *no Reſt*, till they be convinced of their Folly, and prevailed upon to underſtand their own True Happineſs. The *Effect* of theſe earneſt and repeated invitations, was; *ver.* 10; that *the Servants gathered together all, as many as they found, both Bad and Good*; *and the Wedding was furniſhed with Gueſts*: That is; By the continual Preaching of the Goſpel, *Many* are prevailed upon to make *Profeſſion of Religion*, and to ſeek after the Happineſs of the Life to come. But though God *does indeed*, with *all* the *Earneſtneſs* and *Affection* expreſſed under theſe Similitudes in the Parable, *invite* Men into his Kingdom of Glory; Though he *really* would *have All men to be ſaved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth, not willing that Any ſhould periſh, but that All ſhould come to Repentance*: Yet 'tis, above all Things, to be here carefully obſerved, that all theſe *earneſt repeated, preſſing* Invitations, are in no degree any Encouragement to any Man to expect the *End* without the *Means*, but they are merely Invitations to the *Means*, in order to the *End*. God calls no Man to *Salvation*, without a Life of *Righteouſneſs*: But he *invites, perſwades, exhorts, preſſes* men, with all *the poſſible* Arguments both of *Reaſon and Authority*, to *live virtuouſly* in order to their *eternal Happineſs*. And This is what our Saviour teaches in the words of the Text, at the concluſion of the Parable. *When the King*, (ſays he) *came in to ſee the Gueſts, he ſaw there a man which had not on a Wedding-garment: And he ſaith unto him, Friend, how cameſt thou in hither, not having a Wedding-garment? and he was ſpeechleſs. Then ſaid the King to his Servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and caſt him into outer Darkneſs; there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth. For Many are called, but few are choſen.*

In the following Diſcourſe, I ſhall *firſt* explain the Ground and Meaning of this figurative Expreſſion, of *having on a wedding-garment*: And *Then* I ſhall make ſome uſeful and practical *Obſervations* upon the Text.

I. In the *firſt* place; The Original and Ground of this figurative Expreſſion of *having on a wedding-garment*, is very eaſy and natural. The *Mind* of Man being *inviſible*, and the *Temper* or *Diſpoſition* of a *ſpiritual Subſtance* not being diſcernible to *Senſe*; its *Qualifications* conſequently can no otherwiſe be deſcribed in words, than under *figurative* Expreſſions drawn from the *Similitude* of *corporeal Objects*. *Pure* and *Impure*, *Clean* and *Unclean*, when applied to the *Soul* in the *Moral* Senſe; owe the *clearneſs* and *expreſſiveneſs* of their Signification, to the known meaning of the ſame Words when applied in their *Literal* Senſe to Things *corporeal and ſenſible*. The *Habits* of the *Mind*, are very aptly and ſtrongly repreſented to our imagination, by Figures taken with juſtneſs and propriety from the *Habit* of the *Body*. And the conſtant, prevailing, habitual *Temper* or *Diſpoſition* of any Man's *Spirit*, can no way be ſet forth more expreſſively and affectionately; than under the ſimilitude of *Bodily* Garments, ſo inveſting

inveſting the Perſon, as to be his *proper and diſtinguiſhing Attire.* The inviſible and inacceſſible Glory; the inexpreſſible Greatneſs and Majeſty; the inconceivable Purity and Holineſs, of *God Himſelf*; is in Scripture deſcribed, after This manner, by his *putting on glorious* Apparel; by his being Clothed *with Majeſty, and Honour, and decking himſelf with Light as with a* Garment; *Pſ.* xciii. 1; civ. 2. The *Good*, and the *Evil* Qualities of *Men*; the *habitual* ones, which determine and diſtinguiſh the Perſon's *Whole* Character; are, through all the Scriptures, perpetually repreſented under the *ſame* Figure. A *malicious, uncharitable, perſecuting* Spirit; is, in the *Pſalmiſt*'s deſcription, one that Clothes himſelf with *Curſing*; To whom it is as the Cloke *that he has upon him, and as the* Girdle *that he is always girded withal*; Pſ. cix. 17. And when, on the contrary, he is to expreſs the perfecteſt and moſt compleat Character of ſpotleſs Virtue; he does it in the *ſame* manner; *Let thy Prieſts be* Clothed *with Righteouſneſs*; Pſ. cxxxii. 9. In That beautiful and affectionate Apology which *Job* makes for himſelf, in That paſſage where he maintains his paſt Innocency, and deſcribes his virtuous Behaviour in the Days of his Proſperity; *he* likewiſe makes uſe of the *ſame* Metaphor: ch. xxix; *ver.* 15, 16, 14; *I was Eyes to the Blind, and Feet was I to the Lame: I was a Father to the Poor; and the Cauſe which I knew not, I ſearched out: I* put on *Righteouſneſs, and it* Clothed *me*; *my Judgment was as a* Robe *and a Diadem.* The Prophet *Iſaiah*, deſcribing the *Redeemer* of *Iſrael*, ſpeaks after the *ſame* Faſhion; ch. lix. 17; *He* put on *Righteouſneſs as a Breaſt-plate,—— and was* clad *with Zeal as a Cloke.* And concerning the People *Redeemed* by him; ch. lxi. 10; *He has* Clothed *me* (ſays he) *with the* Garments *of Salvation, he hath covered me with the* Robe *of Righteouſneſs, as a* Bridegroom *decketh himſelf with Ornaments, and as a* Bride *adorneth herſelf with her Jewels.*

From *Theſe* figurative Expreſſions ſo frequently occurring in the *Old Teſtament*, the *ſame* manner of ſpeaking has deſcended to the Writers of the *New.* In the Book of the *Revelation*, the Elders before the Throne of God, in St. *John*'s Viſion of the Church in Heaven, are repreſented to him as ſitting, *clothed* in *white Raiment*: And the Nations of them that are ſaved, as ſtanding before the Throne, *clothed* with *white Robes.* And our Saviour, in the ſame Viſion, is accordingly introduced pronouncing; *Bleſſed is he that Watcheth, and keepeth his* Garments: And, They *that have not defiled their* Garments, *ſhall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.* Now Theſe *Garments*, the Text expreſsly tells us; *ch.* xix. 8; are *The Righteouſneſs of the Saints.* The *Whole Paſſage* is exactly parallel to the *Parable in the Goſpel*, of which *my Text* is a Part; and *in particular* it moſt diſtinctly explains, what is there meant by the Perſon *not having on a Wedding-Garment*; ver. 7; *The Marriage of the Lamb is come;—— and to Her* (to the Church) *was granted, that ſhe ſhould be arrayed in fine linnen, clean and white; for the fine linnen is* the Righteouſneſs of the Saints: *And he ſaith unto me, Write; Bleſſed are they which are called to the* Marriage-Supper *of the Lamb.* From This Deſcription it is evident, that the *man*, whom *the King* in the Parable, when he *came in to ſee the Gueſts* whom he had invited to his Son's *Marriage-Feaſt*, ſaw *Not having on a Wedding-garment*; This *man* (I ſay) is *every perſon*, who, *making profeſſion of the Chriſtian-Religion*; yet *practiſes not the Virtues of a Chriſtian Life*; Every perſon who, expecting to be *Saved by Chriſt*, yet regards not the *Conditions on which That Salvation depends*; In a word, every *Profane*, every *Unjuſt*, every *Unrighteous*, every *Debauched* perſon, whom the repeated Invitations of Chriſt in the Goſpel, bring not to a timely and an effectual Repentance.

Rev. iv. 4. ch. vii. 9. xvi. 15. iii. 4.

Having thus explained the *principal Phraſe* in the Text; I ſhall here, before I proceed, obſerve by the Way, how great a Light may be given, from the explication of this *One* Phraſe, to *Many other* paſſages of Scripture, in which the *ſame figure* of Speech has extended itſelf into a *variety* of *other* Expreſſions. Thus when St. *Paul* exhorts; *Eph.* iv. 22, 24; Put *ye* off, *concerning the former converſation, the Old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful Luſts: And* put *ye* on *the New man, which after God is created in Righteouſneſs and*

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true Holiness: 'Tis evident how by phrases literally expressing a Change of the *Habit* of the *Body*, and of the external Appearance of the *Person*, he emphatically describes a Change of the *Moral Habit* and Disposition of the *Mind*. Again; *Col.* ii. 11; and ch. iii. 8, 9, 10, 12, 14. Put off *the body of the Sins of the Flesh*: Put off *all these*; *anger, wrath, malice*, and the like: *Seeing that ye have* put off *the Old man with his deeds*; *and have* put on *the New man, which is renewed in Knowledge, after the Image of him that created him*: Put on *therefore*, (*as the elect of God, holy and beloved,*) *bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering: And above all these*, put on *Charity, which is the Bond of Perfectness*. His Meaning is: *Cloath* yourselves with all Moral and Christian Virtues: Make them the *Habit* of your *Minds*; the constant *character*, by which ye may be known and distinguished from Men of different Principles. The *same* figure of Speech, he carries still higher; *Gal.* iii. 27; *As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have* put on *Christ*; And *Rom.* xiii. 14; Put *ye* on *the Lord Jesus Christ*; *and make not provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof*. The phrase is highly significant and expressive: Let your Minds be habitually *invested* with all Moral and *Christian* Virtues, defending yourselves continually against the Approaches of Temptations, and against the Enticements of a vicious and debauched World.

II. *Secondly*, This being premised by way of *Explication*, I proceed now to make some *useful and practical Observations* upon the words of the Text. And

1*st*, By our Lord's representing the King in the Parable, as coming in to view his Guests, and to see whether Any of them had not on a Wedding-garment; is intended to be set forth to us, how *absolutely* and *indispensably* God *expects and requires*, that every Man who hopes to be admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven, should have his Mind endued (and as it were *cloathed*) with those *habitual virtuous Qualifications*, which can no otherwise be acquired than by righteous Practice. To appear in the *Presence* of a *Prince*, upon any publick and most solemn Occasion, in an improper, indecent, and absurd Dress; is a direct Indignity, and Affront. Now *Sin*; that is, every *moral Impurity*, every *Wickedness* whatsoever, is infinitely more odious in the sight of *God*, than *Any natural* Indecency can be offensive before *Men*. As therefore, even in the *present* time, (to use the words of the Author of the Book of *Wisdom*; ch. i. 5.) *into a malicious soul Wisdom shall not enter, nor dwell in the Body that is subject unto Sin*; *For the Holy Spirit of Discipline will flee Deceit, and remove from Thoughts that are without Understanding, and will not abide when Unrighteousness cometh in*: So, *much more*, in the *future* State, into the *heavenly Jerusalem, there shall in no case enter Any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh Abomination, or maketh a Lie*; Rev. xxi. 27.

2*dly*, By the *Question* the King here puts, to the Man who had not on a Wedding-garment; *Friend*, how *camest thou in hither?* upon *what Pretence*, upon *what Ground*, with *what Assurance*, with *what Expectation* camest thou in hither, not having on a Wedding-garment? by *This question*, I say, our Lord plainly intimates to us, in way of Admonition or Warning; that there *is* such a Thing as a False or ill-grounded Hope; that there *are* deceitful Expectations, which may betray Men into Perdition. And 'tis of the highest importance in the World, not to be led by them into a groundless Presumption. When Men who live in the habitual Practice of Virtue, are, by any particular melancholy and erroneous Notions, led into Great Fears and unreasonable Despondencies; the ill Effect in this Case, provided they continue to live virtuously and religiously, is nothing more than the Trouble itself which arises from such Fears. But on the *other* hand, when Men who live not a virtuous life, have yet a presumptuous Hope, founded upon *Other* Expedients, and built upon *Any other* Grounds whatsoever; here the Error is *Fatal*, and directly leads Men to Destruction. And therefore our Saviour, in *This* Point, is always very plain and explicit; that no one, even of the meanest capacity, can possibly misunderstand him. The *Wedding-garment*, is a *virtuous Life*: Without this, whosoever pretends to any Hope in Christ, upon what presumption soever it be; to *Him* is the Question put

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by our Lord, *Friend, how cameſt thou in hither?* Many are the Expedients, which men of corrupt minds have invented, to deceive themſelves in This matter. Some ſatisfy themſelves with the *Zeal* they expreſs for the *Profeſſion* of the True Religion, tho' they diſhonour That Profeſſion by Unrighteous Works. Others expect to obtain Salvation by the Strength of their *Faith*; utterly miſtaking the *very Meaning* of the word, *Faith*; apprehending it to ſignify *Credulity*, inſtead of *Fidelity*; and that they ſhall be accepted for being *Confident*, inſtead of *Faithful* Servants. Some depend upon certain Things that can be done for them by *Others*; as if any thing could, in the *religious* Senſe, be of Advantage to any man, which does not at all make him the *Better man*. Others rely upon the *Merits of Chriſt*; deceiving themſelves with an Expectation that Chriſt will reſcue them from *Puniſhment*, though they reject all the Motives by which His Goſpel propoſes to reſcue them from *Sin*. Theſe, and all other Expedients of the like nature; all Expedients whatſoever, intended to ſupply the Want of the One thing neceſſary, which is a virtuous Life; are what our Saviour here repreſents to us, by the Perſon *not having on a Wedding-Garment*. It is the ſame thing, as what he elſewhere compares to a Man's *building his Houſe upon the Sand*, inſtead of founding it *upon a Rock*. It is the ſame thing, as what he elſewhere warns us of, when he tells us, *that Many ſhall ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able*: For, *when they ſhall ſay unto him, Lord, Lord, open unto us*; his Anſwer will be, *I know you not whence ye are; Depart from me, all ye workers of Iniquity*.

3dly, By the following Obſervation; that, when the King asked, *how cameſt thou in hither, not having a Wedding-Garment?* the Man was *ſpeechleſs*: By *This* Obſervation (I ſay) our Lord teaches us, that the Judgment of God will be *according to Right*; *According to Right*, in the Senſe that *We* underſtand Juſt and Right; in the Senſe, that even the *Wickedeſt of men* ſhall not be able to deny, is according to Righteouſneſs and Juſtice. The man convicted, was *ſpeechleſs*. He had *nothing to plead* in his own behalf. He was condemned by the Verdict of his *own Conſcience*, as well as by the righteous Sentence of *God*. This evidently ſhows, how abſurd and unreaſonable all thoſe men's Notion of God is, who look upon him not as a juſt and equitable Judge, but as an Arbitrary Lord; condemning or acquitting Men according to certain abſolute Decrees of *his own*, and not according to *Their* Behaviour. Which Doctrine, if it had been true, the perſon here in the Parable might very juſtly have pleaded in his own Excuſe, that it was not poſſible for him to have a Wedding-garment, becauſe the King had not been pleaſed to give him One. And our Saviour, by laying, on the contrary, a particular Streſs upon the man's having *no apology* to make for himſelf; clearly warns us againſt entertaining any ſuch diſhonourable Notions of *God*. The Condemnation of Sinners, is wholly from *Themſelves*: And the Scripture, by perpetually inſiſting that it *is* ſo, urges upon all wicked men, in the moſt affectionate manner, the deſtructive Conſequences of their vicious Courſes, and the indiſpenſable neceſſity of effectual Repentance and Reformation of manners; And at the ſame time, it affords the ſtrongeſt Aſſurance to Thoſe who ſincerely endeavour to live virtuouſly, that by *That* method *certainly*, and by *That* method *only*, they ſhall obtain the eternal Favour of God. The reaſon why even wicked *Heathens* ſhall be condemned at the laſt day, is becauſe they *did things* (as our Saviour expreſſes it) *worthy of ſtripes*; things *in their own nature* worthy of ſtripes; things contrary to the dictates of *their own Conſciences*, contrary to the Light of *univerſal Reaſon*, contrary to their *natural Knowledge of God*: *So that they are without Excuſe*; Rom. i. 20; *Without Excuſe*; That is, in the language of my Text, *Speechleſs*. And This is what the Scripture elſewhere declares, when it tells us that *the mouth of all Wickedneſs ſhall be ſtopped*; Pſ. cvii. 42: And, Rom. iii. 19; *That every mouth may be ſtopped, and all the World become guilty before God*. The Meaning is: When God ſhall finally judge the Secrets of all Hearts, he ſhall be *juſtified* in his Sentence, even Sinners themſelves being Judges; and every mouth ſhall be ſtopt before him,

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him, not by the force of arbitrary and irreſiſtible Power, but by the undeniable Evidence of the Juſtice and Equity and Righteouſneſs of the Judgment.

4thly, By the *Benignity* of the *appellation*, wherewith our Saviour here repreſents the King treating his unworthy Gueſts; Friend, *how cameſt thou in hither, not having a Wedding-garment?* Hereby, I ſay, is affectionately ſet forth to us the *Reality* of the Concern God has for the Salvation of Men. *He*, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, *willeth All men to be ſaved; not willing that Any ſhould periſh, but that All might come to Repentance.* And when Men continue obſtinately impenitent, he condeſcends to repreſent himſelf as *Grieved* with their iniquities. And he *argues* with them, in the moſt *affectionate* manner, by his Prophets and by his Miniſters: *Come now, and let us* Reaſon *together, ſaith the Lord*: *For, Why will ye die, O ye Houſe of Iſrael?*

5thly, By what follows in the *next words after* the affectionate Expreſſion in the Text, Our Saviour adds a *very moving Admonition*, how dreadful at laſt will be the State of all Thoſe, whom the great Goodneſs and Long-ſuffering of God have not been able to bring to Repentance, and to effectual Amendment of Life and Manners. When the Man who had not on a Wedding-garment, was *Speechleſs*, and had *no Excuſe* for his Total Want of the abſolutely neceſſary and indiſpenſable Qualification of Virtue and Holineſs; *Then ſaid the King to his Servants*; ver. 13; *Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and caſt him into outer darkneſs*; *There ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth.*

Laſtly: By the concluding words, with which our Lord cloſes the whole Parable; *ver.* 14; *For many are called, but Few are Choſen*: By Theſe words, I ſay, our Lord clearly and diſtinctly declares, that the *Choſen* or the *Elect* of God, are not Perſons originally and unconditionately from the Beginning, *decreed* to be ſaved; but all ſuch as ſhall at the End be found *having a Wedding-garment*, that is, Clothed with Righteouſneſs, having led *a Holy and a Virtuous Life.*

SERMON

SERMON XXI.

Every Man is principally to regard his own proper Duty.

JOHN. xxi. 22.

Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is That to Thee; Follow Thou me.

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IN the Beginning of This chapter, our Lord appearing to his Disciples after his Resurrection, and making himself known to them by a miraculous draught of Fishes, *ver.* 6, 7, 11; takes that Occasion to give a *particular Admonition* to *Peter*, to be as *diligent* for the *time to come* in propagating the *Doctrine* of *Christ*, as he had in *time past* been *faulty* in denying of *Christ himself*. For which reason he *repeats* his Question no less than *Three times* successively; *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?* till *Peter* was *grieved* at it, ver. 17; and his heart smote him with Regret, at the Justness of the Reproof, and at the Earnestness of the threefold Repetition. Yet at the same time it could not but be matter of *Comfort* to him, and an assured Token of his Repentance being *accepted*; that our Lord was pleased, in so particular and distinct a manner, to enquire into the Sincerity of his *Love*, and to lay upon him such a repeated Command to *feed his Flock*. The Church of *Rome*, has built upon these words a very extraordinary Consequence: That, because our Saviour commanded St. *Peter* to instruct men diligently in the Christian Faith,

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and St. *Peter* was afterward martyred at *Rome* by the Heathen Emperor; therefore the *Biſhop of Rome* has a perpetual Right to require what doctrines he pleaſes, to be received implicitly by the whole Chriſtian Church; without being at all able to prove, that thoſe Doctrines were ever taught either by Chriſt or by St. *Peter*. Which is juſt ſuch another Conſequence as their inferring the Supremacy of the Biſhop or Church of *Rome*, from our Lord's ſtyling St. *Peter* a Rock, or a Firm and Solid part in That *Foundation of the Apoſtles and Prophets*, upon which the *Church of Chriſt* was to be built. But though neither the One nor the Other were indeed *any* Emblem of *Authority* at all, but of *Duty* only, and of *Succeſs in his Labours*; yet, as being prophetick Declarations of *great Succeſs* in thoſe Labours, they could not but be matter of great *Encouragement* and *Satisfaction* to his mind. And therefore our Lord, (according to his conſtant Cuſtom of adding Arguments of *Humility* to all his Promiſes;) as, in the *former* caſe, after the Promiſe of *building his Church upon This Rock*, and *giving to Peter the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, (Matt. xvi. 18, 19, 21;) to prevent his Diſciples being puſt up with a ſudden expectation of That Kingdom, he immediately proceeds to a Prediction of *his own Sufferings*, of the Sufferings *our Lord himſelf* was to ſubmit to; ſo, in this *latter* caſe, after having given This *Command* to *Peter* to *feed his Sheep*; immediately he proceeds in the very next words, to foretel what *Sufferings Peter himſelf* likewiſe ſhould undergo. ver. 18. *Verily, verily, I ſay unto thee, when thou waſt young, thou girdedſt thyſelf, and walkedſt whither thou wouldeſt*; (alluding to the *Readineſs*, wherewith *Peter, when he heard that it was the Lord, girt his Fiſher's Coat about him, and caſt himſelf into the Sea*, ver. 7;) *But when thou ſhalt be old*, ſaith he, *thou ſhalt ſtretch forth thy hands, and another ſhall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldeſt not*; that is, ſhould carry him to be crucified. Upon This, *Peter* ver. 20. *turning about*, and *ſeeing the Diſciple, whom Jeſus loved, following* them; *he ſaith to Jeſus, Lord, and what ſhall This man do?* The Queſtion was a matter of mere *Curioſity*; and therefore our Lord anſwers it accordingly in the words of my Text, *If I will that he tarry till I come, what is That to Thee? Follow thou Me.* *Modern* Expoſitors have imagined, that our Lord by theſe words meant to foretel, that St. *John* ſhould live till after the *Deſtruction of Jeruſalem*, which they fancy is ſometimes ſtiled *The Coming of Chriſt*. In the *Apoſtles* days, the ſame words were underſtood by ſome of the Diſciples, as a Prediction that St. *John* ſhould not *die at all*, but ſhould continue alive till the *Day of Judgment*; which thoſe, who thus underſtood the words, in all probability apprehended to be much nearer than it was. *Then went this Saying abroad among the Brethren*, ver. 23; *that That Diſciple ſhould not die.* Yet *Jeſus* ſaid no ſuch thing, as that That Diſciple ſhould continue alive, either till the *Deſtruction of Jeruſalem* or till his Final *Coming to Judgment*, or to *any other* determinate time; but only that it concerned not *Peter* to enquire *at all*, what the Divine Providence had thought fit to determine concerning his *Fellow-Diſciple*. It was foretold to *Peter* for *particular reaſons*, that he himſelf ſhould *die a Martyr*: Poſſibly to *ſupport and comfort* him under the uneaſy Thoughts, of his having before ſo ſhamefully denied his Maſter: Poſſibly alſo for a *contrary* reaſon, to *humble* him, and keep him from being *puffed up* with the preheminence that ſeemed in Some manner to be given him above the reſt of the Diſciples: Or for any *Other reaſon*, which the Wiſdom of God thought proper. But as to That *Other Diſciple*, ſays our Lord; whether *He alſo* ſhall die by the hands of *Violence*, or whether he ſhall die a *Natural Death*, or *how* and *when* he ſhall die, or whether he ſhall *die at all*; *What is That to Thee? Follow Thou Me.*

The words of the Text being thus explained; the *Obſervations* naturally ariſing from them, are briefly as follows.

I. *Firſt*; That every perſon, in every ſtation of life whatſoever, wherein the Providence of God thinks fit to place him, has always ſome *plain* and *certain Duty*, which it is his preſent proper Buſineſs to attend to. *Follow thou Me.* Attend (ſays our Lord,) to the Doctrine which I am now teaching you; That, when I am aſcended into Heaven, you may inſtruct Others therein with Fide-

lity

lity and Diligence, which is *Feeding my Sheep*. This was St. *Peter*'s Duty, at the Time of our Lord's ſpeaking theſe words to him: And the Admonition is recorded, as the reſt of our Saviour's Diſcourſes were, upon account of the *Univerſality* and *Perpetuity* of its *Application*. 'Twas not in *One ſingle caſe* only that our Lord gave this Intimation; *What I ſay unto you, I ſay unto All, Watch*: But, in general, the ſame was intended to be underſtood in almoſt *all* his Inſtructions. *Follow thou Me*; is an Admonition to *Every man*, at *all* Times and in *all* Places, and in *every* Circumſtance of Life, to be *intent upon* his proper Duty, whatſoever it be. God has been pleaſed to diſtribute among Men very different Gifts, to each one his proper Talent; and an Account will be expected from every one, *according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not*. In the right Uſe of thoſe Capacities and Faculties, thoſe Abilities and Opportunities whatſoever they be, wherewith God has entruſted every particular Perſon; in *This* conſiſts That perſon's proper and peculiar Duty. They who are endued with *Riches*, *Power*, and *Authority* in the World; are, by the great Weight and Influence of their Example, to promote *Juſtice*, *Equity* and *Charity* among Mankind. They who are *Poor* and *Afflicted*, have a particular Call to the Virtues of *Patience* and *Contentment*; which, in their proper place, do no leſs truly and effectually promote the Glory of God, than the more conſpicuous Virtues of thoſe in higher Stations. Thoſe who have *Learning* and *Knowledge*, are to ſpread the Light of *Truth* with Fidelity and Diligence, and to apply the Arguments of *uncorrupt Religion*, and the Motives of *Virtuous Practice*, with all the Clearneſs and Strength they are able. And Thoſe of the *Loweſt* and *Meaneſt* Capacities, even the moſt *Ignorant* of all, have ſtill a plain way of Duty before them; to adhere ſtedfaſtly to thoſe *Few Truths* they know, thoſe moſt *Important Truths* which no Man can innocently be ignorant of: *Living ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world*, becauſe *God has appointed a Day in the which he will judge the World in Righteouſneſs*: And taking heed not to be impoſed upon with things they *cannot underſtand*; by which the World has been led into the inextricable Labyrinth of endleſs and unintelligible Superſtitions. *Before* the Will of God was made clear by *Revelation*, the *Light of Nature* was mens *Guide*, and the *Obligations of right Reaſon* were the *Rule of their Duty* and their *Guard againſt Superſtition*. Since that time, whoſoever has had the Doctrine of the Goſpel *reaſonably* and *credibly* propoſed to him, to *Him* does our Lord ſay, as to St. *Peter* in the Text, *Follow Thou Me*. He is *in general* to follow Chriſt, in the *univerſal Practice* of *all* Chriſtian Virtues; and *in particular* he is to attend to *that proper and peculiar* Duty, whatſoever it be, which is the right Uſe of thoſe Talents wherewith Providence has inſtruſted him. *Every man*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *hath his proper Gift of God*; *one after This manner, and another after That*; 1 Cor. vii. 7. *To one is given by the Spirit, the word of Wiſdom*; *to another, the word of Knowledge*; ——— *to another, Faith*; ——*to another, Prophecy, to another,*——*divers kinds of Tongues*: 1 Cor. xii. 8; *Having then gifts differing, according to the grace that is given to us*; *whether Prophecy, let us propheſy according to the proportion of Faith*; (That is, let us teach the Will of God *faithfully*, according to the degree of the *Ability*, the *Talent*, the *Truſt* committed to us: That is the Meaning of the word, *Faith*, in This place:) *Or* (whether it be) *Miniſtry, let us wait on our miniſtring*; *or he that teacheth, on Teaching*; *Or he that exhorteth, on Exhortation*; *He that giveth, let him do it with Simplicity*; *he that ruleth, with diligence*; *he that ſheweth mercy, with chearfulneſs*; Rom. xii 6. Or in the words of St. *Peter*; 1 Pet. iv. 10: *As every man has received the Gift, even ſo miniſter the ſame one to another, as good Stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man ſpeak, let him ſpeak as the Oracles of God: If any man miniſter, let him do it as of the Ability which God giveth.*

This is the *Firſt* Obſervation I would draw from the words of the Text: That every Perſon, in every Station of life whatſoever, wherein the Providence of God thinks fit to place him, has always ſome *plain* and *certain* Duty, which it is his preſent proper Buſineſs to attend to: *Follow thou Me.*

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II. The *Second* thing obſervable in the words of the Text, is; that when *Peter* put a Queſtion to our Lord, upon a matter which did not at all relate to his own *proper* and *particular* Duty; the Anſwer our Lord gives him, (*what is that to Thee? Follow thou Me*;) is Such an Anſwer, as he conſtantly gave at all *other* Times to *any* of his Diſciples upon *any* the like Occaſion. It was his *General* Method, through the whole Hiſtory of the Goſpel; whatever *Diſcourſe* was raiſed, or whatever *Queſtion* was put to him, which had no relation to the particular *Duty* of the perſons that propoſed it; it was his conſtant and general Method, inſtead of ſatisfying their *Curioſity* by a direct Anſwer, to turn the Diſcourſe into an occaſion either of inſtructing them in the *Knowledge* of their *Duty*, or of exhorting them to the *Practice* of it. Thus, when his Diſciples asked him; *Matt.* xxiv. 3; *When ſhall theſe things be? and what ſhall be the Sign of thy coming, and of the End of the World?* His Anſwer is, *Watch YE*, and *be ye ready* always; *for in ſuch an hour as you think not, the Son of Man cometh.* When one asked him; *Luke* xiii. 23; *Lord, are there Few that be ſaved?* inſtead of ſatisfying the perſon's Curioſity, he exhorts both Him that asked the Queſtion, and as many Others as were preſent, to take care that *They themſelves* be found in the number, *whatever* That *Number* be: *Strive YE to enter in at the ſtrait gate.* And again: When his Diſciples asked him; *Matt.* xviii. 1; *Who is the Greateſt in the Kingdom of Heaven?* inſtead of naming, according to *Their* expectation, ſome among themſelves, who had converſed with him moſt intimately here upon Earth, (which Expectation ſhowed forth itſelf particularly in the Requeſt of the Mother of *Zebedee*'s Children, that *One of her Sons* might *ſit on his Right hand*, and *the Other on his Left in his Kingdom*;) inſtead of This, I ſay, he tells them *Which* was the *Only Way*, whereby they could attain to the Kingdom of Heaven *at all*. *Setting a little Child in the midſt of them*, he ſaid; *Verily I ſay unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little Children, ye ſhall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Thus, *in general*, whatever Queſtion or matter of Diſcourſe had no relation to the proper and neceſſary *Duty* of the *perſons themſelves* who moved the Diſcourſe; our Lord always turned it from a matter of mere Curioſity, into ſome real *Inſtruction* or uſeful *Exhortation*.

III. A *Third* thing to be obſerved in the words of the Text, is; that our Lord does here diſcourage *in particular*, a *Curioſity of Enquiry* into *Other mens Affairs*. 'Twas upon *Peter*'s enquiring concerning *Another Diſciple* which followed him, *and what ſhall this man do?* that our Lord made to him the Reply in the Text, *What is That to Thee? Follow Thou Me.* The Enquiry was *innocent*; And there is no reaſon to ſuppoſe that our Lord was *angry* with *Peter* for making it. But he was willing to take This opportunity, (according to his Cuſtom upon all Other occaſions,) of inculcating upon *Peter his own* Duty, and of diſcouraging all *needleſs Curioſity* concerning the Affairs of *Others*. What was *innocent* in St. *Peter* in the *preſent* caſe, and may in *numberleſs* Inſtances be *innocent* in *Any* man; is yet a matter which *may* grow into a *Vice*, and, by becoming a *Habit*, may lead to things very *detrimental* to a right Temper and Diſpoſition of Mind. The *Evil* of *Vain Curioſity* does not appear at firſt ſight, either to *Others*, or perhaps to the *perſon himſelf*; but when indulged habitually, it frequently terminates in an *idle*, *worthleſs*, and *unprofitable* Temper: Such as is deſcribed by St. *Paul*; 1 Tim. v. 13; *They learn to be idle, wandring about from houſe to houſe; and not only idle, but tatlers alſo, and buſy-bodies, ſpeaking things which they ought not*: Or, as St. *Peter* expreſſes it, 1 Pet. iv. 15; *Buſy-bodies in other mens matters*, This Temper, though *in itſelf* it may ſeem only *trifling* and *worthleſs*, yet in its conſequences it leads very naturally to *Other* and *Greater Vices*; to *Envy*, *Striſe*, *Contentiouſneſs*, *Pride*, *Cenſorlouſneſs*, *Diſcontent*, and numberleſs other troubleſome and miſchievous Effects. Perſons of This diſpoſition, are extremely apt to be continually *pulling Motes out of their Brother's Eye*, while a *Beam* remains unperceived *in their Own*; That is, to be perpetually *magnifying* the *Faults* of Others, and altogether *inſenſible* of *their Own*. They are very apt, either to *under-*

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value and *despise* the *Talents* and *Abilities* wherewith God has been pleased to endue Others; which is what St. *Paul* represents under the similitude of *the Eye saying unto the Hand, I have no need of Thee; and again the Head to the Feet, I have no need of You:* Or else, in the contrary Extreme, they will *envy* and *repine at* the *Advantages* that Others enjoy; Which is what our Saviour reproves in his Parable of the Labourers, *Is Thine Eye evil, because I am Good?* The same Temper it is, that moves persons of different *Sects*, to be inquisitive about the possibility of men's Salvation in *Other Communities*, rather than attentive to discover and amend any Errours in *their Own*. Whether a *Heathen*, to whom the Light of the Gospel was never made known, can be saved by obeying the Law of *Reason*; and whether Salvation is attainable in such *Christian Societies*, as are greatly corrupt in very important Doctrines; are Questions, to which our Saviour would have replied, *What is That to Thee? Follow Thou Me.* But one thing is very certain, that no man can be saved, who does not sincerely endeavour to find out the *Truth* for *Himself*; who *wilfully* propagates *known* Errours; and has no Sollicitude to reform his *Own* Vices, and (as far as lies in *His* Power) the Vices of his *Companions and Friends*.

IV. *Fourthly*, As our Lord in the Text expressly discourages all needless Curiosity of inquiry into other Men's *Affairs*; so by Analogy, the same Caution may in its Application reasonably be extended likewise to a Curiosity about *Doctrines* not of importance to Religion. Whatever *Notions* do in their Consequences affect the *Worship* of the *True God*, or have any direct influence either in promoting or hindring the Practice of *True Virtue and Goodness* among *Men*; These indeed can never be too carefully *inquired* into, or too thoroughly examined. But Speculations which are of no such Consequence, the Fewer of them Religion is concerned with, the better. They are generally matter of Contention only, and uncharitable Animosity; and have brought great Scandal and Reproach upon Religion. A Fondness of determining things not at all certain, or not clearly understood; and a Shame of departing from what could not reasonaby be maintained; has been the Ground and the Support, the Cause both of the Rise and of the Continuance, of almost all the Sects, with which the *World* has been *divided*, and the *Religion* of Christ *dishonoured*. Could Men prevail with themselves to be more zealous about things confessedly of Universal Importance, than about the distinguishing Notions of particular Sects; which, in the common Methods of the World, are so much the *more eagerly* contended for, as they are *less reasonable* or *more uncertain*: Could men, I say, prevail with themselves to be *less sollicitous* about things uncertain, and *more diligent* in the Practice of undisputed Virtues; the State of Religion in the World, would soon have a very different Aspect; and the Effect of its influence upon mens Lives and Manners, would be, unspeakably great, with respect both to the Happiness of the *present Life*, and of That also which is *to come*.

V. *Fifthly and Lastly*; The Last Observation I shall raise from the words of the Text, is; that we are not to draw *Inferences* from *particular Expressions* in Scripture, different from the evident *Intention* of the *Whole Discourse* in which such Expressions are found. From our Lord's saying to St. *Peter, If I will that* That other Disciple *tarry till I come, what is That to Thee?* immediately *This Saying went abroad among the Brethren, that That Disciple should not die. Yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but,* whether he shall die or no, *what is That to Thee?* In like manner; he who from the Parable of the *Ten Virgins*, whereof *Five* are represented as being *Wise*, and *Five Foolish*; should infer that the *Number* of those who shall be *Saved*, will be exactly *Equal* to that of Those who *Perish*; when the Parable was not intended to describe the *Number*, but the *Qualifications* of Them which shall be saved; would be found to make a very inconsequent Deduction. And the like would be the Argument, of Him who, from the Parable of the *Talents*; (wherein the Servants, who with *Ten*, and with *Five*, and with *Two* Talents committed to them are represented as being proportionally *rewarded* for their proportional

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Improvement of theſe reſpective Sums; while *He only* was *puniſhed*, who hid in a Napkin his *One Single* Talent;) ſhould infer, that *Thoſe only* will periſh, who have but *Small Abilities*; though the Scripture on the contrary expreſsly declares, that *to whom much is given, of Him will be the more required.* All Arguings, I ſay, of This Kind, from ſingle *incidental* Expreſſions of Scripture; are mere groundleſs Imaginations: Nor can Any thing ever be of real Uſe in the Religion of a Chriſtian, but our being careful in the *Profeſſion* of *Thoſe Doctrines*, and in the *Practice* of *Thoſe Duties*, which are evidently the *intentional* Aim and View of our Lord's *whole* Diſcourſes.

SERMON

SERMON XXII.

The Folly of losing one's Soul to gain the whole World.

MATT. xvi. 26.

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul.

OUR Saviour in his Parable of the Sower, represents to us the incredible *Carelessness* of men, in the most important matters of Religion, by a very remarkable Comparison: As *some seeds*, says he, *fall by the way-side, and the fowls come and devour them up*; so *when any one heareth the Word of the Kingdom and understandeth it not*, i. e. attends not to it, nor fixes his Mind upon it, *then cometh the wicked one, and* catcheth away *That which was sown in his Heart*. The meaning is; not that the Devil has Power *literally*, to steal mens Knowledge out of their minds, and rob them of their religious Notions; but that men are frequently so *careless*, even in things which they themselves *well know* to be of the utmost importance to them; that the *degree* of their negligence cannot be Truly represented by any lower figure, than by supposing them to have even lost *out of their Minds* Those Notions, to which they give so little attention. St *Paul* SERM. XXII.

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has a Phraſe no leſs expreſſive, *Gal.* iii. 1; *O fooliſh Galatians, who has* bewitched *you*; *that you, before whoſe eyes Jeſus Chriſt has been* evidently *ſet forth*, yet *ſhould not obey the Truth? That* men ſhould have the Truth *evidently* ſet before them, and yet *not obey* it; is ſo great an Abſurdity, that he repreſents it elegantly by That *unuſual* Phraſe, *Who has* bewitched *you?*

That, in *temporal* affairs, a man ſhould accept *any thing* in exchange for his *Life*, is a Folly never heard of. *Skin for Skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his Life*; Job ii. 4. In *ſpiritual* Concerns, the Argument is as much ſtronger, as *Eternity* is of more importance than *Time*, and *Immortality* of greater Conſequence than this *tranſitory Life*. Our Saviour, with great Propriety of expreſſion, compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a *Treaſure hid in a Field, which when a man hath found, for joy thereof he goeth, and ſelleth all that he hath, and buyeth that Field*; Matt. xiii. 44; and to a *goodly pearl of great price*, (ver. 46.) *which when a man had found, he went and ſold all that he had, and bought it.* To part with this ineſtimable Treaſure, for a *Triſle*; and accept any thing, that the pleaſures of Sin can afford a man, in exchange for his own Life, in exchange for his future and *eternal* life; is the Folly our Saviour intended to expoſe in the words of the Text, *What is a man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole World, and loſe his own Soul?*

That there is *no profit* in ſuch an Exchange, is a Propoſition that wants no *Proof*. For there is no man ſo ſtupid, as not to be ſenſible of this Truth; no man ſo ignorant, as not to think it needleſs for Another to go about to convince him of it. Yet ſo it is, that even This very *Reaſon*, the indiſputable *Certainty* of ſo great a Truth, and its being without controverſy and of neceſſity acknowledged by all, comes in the event of things to be *itſelf* an occaſion, that makes men ſtand in need of *more* earneſt *exhortations*, to perſwade them not to forget or neglect it. For, as the *ſtrongeſt* Objects, which make perpetually an equal and *continued* Impreſſion upon our Senſes, are apt, by reaſon of their *conſtant* Preſence, to affect us *little* more, than if they made *no* Impreſſion upon the Senſe at all: So the *abſolute evident Certainty* of this great Truth, leaving *no room* for Enquiry or Debate, makes careleſs men almoſt as much lay aſide the Thoughts of it, as if the Certainty were on the *other* ſide of the Queſtion; and as if they really thought it a *ſufficient profit*, to gain, not the *Whole* World, but even ſome of the moſt *inconſiderable* of its enjoyments, at the Expence of their own Souls. It is very evident, *no man* can poſſibly ſo think: It is very evident that *every man*, who pretends to believe any thing of Religion at all, muſt of neceſſity acknowledge the inexpreſſible diſproportion between things temporary and eternal. Nevertheleſs, they are not *influenced* by this great Truth, according to the importance of it; but ſhake off the Thoughts of it, as if it were of no moment to meditate upon what they think they are *already ſufficiently convinced of*; and look upon it as a troubleſome importunity, to be always reminding them of *That*, which they *well knew* and were ſatisfied of *before*. They *know* it indeed very well; But *That Knowledge* of theirs, without frequent and ſerious Meditation, is *like* unto Ignorance; becauſe it has *no Effect*, and makes *no Impreſſion*. It is like the *ſpeculative* knowledge of a Truth that concerns them not; or like the *habitual* Underſtanding of a mathematical Demonſtration, never recollected. Moſt reaſonably therefore does our Saviour put to us the Queſtion, and expects that we ſhould frequently put it to *ourſelves*; *What is a man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole World, and loſe his own Soul?*

The *occaſion* of the words, was his diſcourſing to his Diſciples concerning the expectation of *Perſecution*. He had told them; *ver.* 21; how many things *he himſelf* was to ſuffer at the hands of the *Jews*; and he goes on to tell them; *ver.* 24; that *They alſo* muſt expect to ſuffer in like manner: *If any man will come after me*, he muſt *deny himſelf, and take up his croſs, and follow me*; *For whoſoever will loſe his Life for my ſake, ſhall find it*; and *whoſoever will ſave his Life, ſhall loſe it*: That is, whoſoever parts with his virtue and good conſcience, to *ſave* his *temporal* life; ſhall *loſe* that which is *eternal*; and by eſcaping

ing the *first* Death for a *time*, ſhall incur the penalty of the *ſecond* Death *for ever*. And this explains the meaning of thoſe difficult words which follow in the 28th verſe, *Verily, I ſay unto you, there be ſome ſtanding here, which ſhall not taſte of Death, till they ſee the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom.* By theſe words, *there be ſome ſtanding here*, it is probable he had regard particularly to *Judas*: And it ſeems to have been his intention, to repreſent *natural* or *temporal* Death ſo inconſiderable, as if *They* only, who fell under the *ſecond* Death, could with any propriety be ſaid to *Taſte* the Bitterneſs of *Death* at all. They ſhall not *taſte of Death, till they ſee the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom.* And This *increaſes* the Strength of the Argument he intended to inforce in the words of the Text; *What is a man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole World, and loſe his own Soul?*

The *Argument* our Saviour here uſes, is one of that kind, which by taking into the Suppoſition much more than *is* or *can be true*; concludes ſo much the *more undeniably*, and with the *greater Strength*, in all *caſes* which really *are* true. He puts the Suppoſition, that a man by loſing his Soul, *could* gain the *whole* World: And if he *did* ſo, his Gain would be *nothing*. The *Concluſion* he intended we ſhould draw from hence, is this; How much more *fooliſh* then are ſinful men; who *loſe* their Souls, and yet, in the exchange, gain *not the whole World* neither; nor indeed, any conſiderable *part* of it?

For, *what* is it, that *Sinners* generally enjoy in the World, more than the *righteous?* Not a *longer Life:* Very often a *ſhorter*, being cut off by their own Folly in the midſt of their days. Not a *healthier Body:* Moſt uſually a more *infirm* one, made ſo by their own debauched and intemperate Living. Not a more *ſatisfied Mind*: On the contrary, a Mind *very* Uneaſy for the moſt part, and full of *perplexity*. In a word, they enjoy in reality, more than the Righteous, nothing but the *bare perverſeneſs*, nothing but the *mere irregularity* of thoſe very pleaſures, which really and in Truth are much more pleaſures when accompanied with innocency.

But to be *more diſtinct and particular*, in conſidering, 1*ſt*, the *Suppoſition*, which our Saviour puts; and 2*dly*, the *Concluſion*, which he intends we ſhould draw from it.

I. *Firſt*; Our Saviour puts the *Suppoſition*, that a Man, by loſing his Soul, could, in exchange, gain to himſelf the *whole World:* And, upon That Suppoſition, propoſes the Queſtion; *What would it profit Him?* The Anſwer, *that it would profit him nothing*, is what every man's natural Senſe immediately ſuggeſts to him. The *Doctrine* therefore *included* in our Saviour's *Queſtion*, and *aſſerted* in the *Anſwer*, is This: that, could a man, by being *wicked*, gain to himſelf abſolutely *all* the *good* things of this preſent life; and, on the contrary, by being conſcientiouſly *religious*, were *certainly* to ſuffer *all* the *Evil*, that this preſent World can inflict; (which, generally ſpeaking, is by no means the caſe: But, ſuppoſing it *were*;) yet ſtill the *Wicked* man's Choice would be infinitely *fooliſh*, and the *Virtuous* man's truly *Wiſe*.

For, *what* is it, that a *virtuous* man, even upon *This* Suppoſition, can poſſibly ſuffer? *All* the *Evils* of this preſent life; All the *external* Evils, which are the *only* ones that *can* befal a righteous Man; are *poverty* of *condition*, *Contempt* in the *Opinion of wicked men*, and *Pain* or Uneaſineſs of *Body:* Things very grievous indeed to Fleſh and Blood, and which may and ought by all *lawful* means to be carefully avoided. But they are all of them *natural* Calamities; incident to the *wicked*, as well as to the *righteous*: Sometimes, they can by *no means* be avoided; neither by any *lawful*, nor by any *unlawful* Practices. But when they *can* be avoided, by deſerting our Duty; it is by no means worth while to do it, at the expence of our *Souls*. For *theſe Evils*, at the *worſt* that can be ſuppoſed, are all *Temporal*; and, when at the greateſt extremity, not *Temporal* only, but even *very ſhort* alſo. *My Friends*, ſaith our Saviour, *Be not afraid of them that kill the Body, and after That have no more that they can do: But I will forewarn you, whom you ſhall fear; Fear Him, who, after he has killed has power to caſt into Hell. yea, I ſay unto you, Fear Him.* The Argument uſed by the Lepers in the Siege of *Samaria*; 2 *Kings*, vii. 4; is very applicable

Luke xii. 4

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to This caſe: *If we enter into the City*, ſaid they, *the Famine is in the City, and we ſhall die*; *and if we ſit here, we die alſo*; and if *we fall unto the Hoſt of the Syrians, and——they kill us, we ſhall but die.* A man in the worſt of Circumſtances, and under the ſevereſt Perſecutions, by adhering to the Cauſe of Truth and Virtue, can loſe but his temporal Life; and ſo he muſt *however*, perhaps by a Diſeaſe more painful, than the Death his Perſecutors would inflict; and his Mind, at the ſame time, not ſupported with the Hopes of a glorious Immortality.

On the other hand; *what* is it, that a wicked Man, even upon the *high* Suppoſition our Saviour puts, can poſſibly attain; All the *good* things of this *whole* World, are *Riches*, *Honour*, and *Pleaſure*: Now were it poſſible that a Man, in exchange for his Soul, could gain to himſelf the whole Compaſs of theſe ſenſual Enjoyments; (Which yet is indeed very far from any wicked Man's caſe; But ſuppoſe he *could*;) *Suppoſe* he could, in *Riches*, exceed the Glory of *Solomon*; and, in *Power*, extend his Dominion from one Sea to the other, and force all Nations to do him Service; and, in his *perſonal* capacity, enjoy a continued ſeries of the greateſt and moſt uninterrupted *pleaſures*; And All this, even to the Age of *Methuſalem*; yet ſtill theſe things would be but *Temporal*; and, when paſt, though after the *longeſt* duration, they would all ſeem but as a *ſha-*

Prov. xi. 4. *dow that departeth, and as a Dream when one awaketh. Riches* would *not profit* the man, *in the day of wrath*; and the Time muſt at length come, when it would be ſaid unto him, *Thou Fool, this night ſhall thy Soul be required of thee*; and his having been *clothed in purple and fine linnen, and having fared ſumptuouſly every day*, would be *no comfort* to him, when he finally *lift up his Eyes in Torment*. Beſides, that, even in this *preſent* life itſelf, ſuch a Poſſeſſor of the *whole* World, could enjoy *really* but a very *ſmall* part, of what, in *fancy and imagination only*, would be his own *property*. He who knew and enjoyed more of it, than any other mortal Man; concluded more than once, that even in the higheſt Pitch of temporal Proſperity, *All is Vanity and Vexation of Spirit.*

Thus have I put the Caſe, according to our Lord's *Suppoſition* in the Text, not as things uſually *are*, but to the *greateſt* advantage on the ſide of Wickedneſs; that a Man, in exchange for his Soul, could gain by unrighteouſneſs the *whole* World; or, by adhering to Virtue, would on the contrary *ſuffer*, all he can *here ſuffer*. By conſidering the *Recompence*, which will attend the Choice of *either* part; we may be enabled to judge, of the *Truth* of our Lord's aſſertion; that the *wicked* Man's Choice, even upon this extraordinary *ſuppoſition* of gaining the *whole* World, would be very *fooliſh*; and the *virtuous* Man's, very *wiſe*. For, to enter into the *particulars*; Suppoſe a religious Perſon, is, by his adhering to the ways of Virtue, reduced to extreme *Poverty*; (which however is very ſeldom the Caſe, except in times of Perſecution only; yet there is a *worſe Poverty*, which at the ſame time he *avoids* by *that very* Choice; a State of *Excluſion* from the Love and Favour of God, which Loſs, even in this *preſent* Time, is an anticipation of outer Darkneſs: *Rev.* iii. 17; *Thou knoweſt not, that thou art wretched and miſerable and* poor *and blind and naked.* This *Poverty*, the *virtuous* Man, even under the *ſevereſt* Perſecutions, is ſure to

Prov. iii. 14. eſcape; and under the *greateſt* preſſure of *temporal* Wants, ſecures to himſelf the *truer* and more *certain Riches* of *Virtue and Contentment*; the *Merchandiſe whereof is better than the Merchandiſe of Silver, and the gain thereof than fine Gold.* He ſecures to himſelf That *Pearl* of *great price*, of which our Saviour affirms, that *He* was a wiſe man, who *ſold all that he had, and bought it.* He is num-

Jam. ii. 5. bered with Thoſe, concerning whom St. *James* declares, that though they are *poor* in *this World*, yet *they are rich in Faith*; *and Heirs of the Kingdom, which*

Heb. xi. 26. *God has promiſed to them that love him.* He with *Moſes*, eſteems *the reproach of Chriſt*, greater Riches *than the treaſures in Egypt*; and may juſtly apply to himſelf our *Saviour's* words to the Church of *Smyrna*, Rev. ii. 9; *I know thy works, and tribulation and poverty, but thou art* rich. He has *laid up for himſelf treaſure in Heaven, where neither moth nor ruſt doth corrupt, nor Thieves break through and ſteal*, nor any Anxiety of Mind diſturbs the enjoyment of it.

Again:

Again: If a truly religious Man, does, by being ſuch, fall under the *greateſt* Contempt, in the Opinion of wicked Men; yet there is a *worſe Diſhonour*, which he at the ſame time avoids, even the *Shame and Diſhonour* of *Sin*, to his *own Conſcience here*, and in the preſence of the *whole World hereafter*; when they that ſleep in the duſt of the earth, ſhall *awake, ſome to everlaſting Life, and ſome to* Shame and Everlaſting Contempt; *Dan.* xii. 2. And, under the *higheſt* unjuſt *Reproaches* of Men, he is ſecure in the Poſſeſſion of true *Worth*; of *That Worth*, which *God* himſelf the Judge of All, will vouchſafe to Honour in the preſence of the Holy Angels; when Chriſt ſhall preſent thoſe who ſuffer for his ſake, as *Kings and Prieſts unto God even his Father*; and they *ſhall reign with Him for ever*; crowned with *Glory* and *Immortality*; being made *Sons of God*, and *equal unto the Angels*; among whom, *they that be wiſe, ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the Firmament*; and *they that turn many to righteouſneſs, as the Stars for ever and ever.*

Laſtly, If a virtuous and good man ſuffers in his *Perſon*, even unto *Death* itſelf; (which *very ſeldom* is the Caſe;) yet there *is* a Calamity *greater* than Death, which he avoids by chooſing the preſent temporal Suffering. He avoids the Sting of a guilty Conſcience, the inſupportable Terrour of a wounded Spirit, and the future inexpreſſible Pains of Hell. And he gains at preſent That Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt; which can be exceeded by nothing, but That which follows after it, even That Happineſs of Heaven, which *Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of man to conceive*; a Happineſs prepared for them that love him, by *Him in whoſe preſence there is Fulneſs of Joy, and at whoſe right hand there are Pleaſures for evermore.*

On the other hand; Could a *wicked* man, by being wicked, gain to himſelf (as our Saviour here puts the Suppoſition; could he *certainly* gain to himſelf) the *whole* World; yet *where* would be the Wiſdom and Advantage of *His* Choice, who thus *laid up Treaſure for Himſelf, and was not rich towards God?* For, by chooſing *Temporal* Wealth, Honour, and Pleaſure, upon the Terms of unrighteouſneſs; he forfeits That unſpeakable Happineſs which is *Eternal:* and by avoiding the *ſhort and tranſitory* Evils, of *preſent* Poverty, Contempt, and Pain; he chooſes the ſame *future* evils, to continue *for ever*; where the worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched, in which the fooliſh and impenitent Sinner *ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord and from the glory of his Power. This* Conſideration, ſets forth in few words, the extreme Folly of the Man that loſes his own Soul, even upon that *High Suppoſition* our Saviour puts, of his gaining in exchange for it the *whole World*: Which was the *Firſt* thing to be conſidered. But Luke xii. 21. 2 Th. i. 9.

II. *Secondly*; The *Principal* Deſign of our Saviour in This Argument, was, by taking into the Suppoſition much *more* than *is* or *can be true*; to conclude ſo much the *more undeniably*, and with the *greater Strength*, in all *caſes* which really *are* true. He puts the *Suppoſition*, that a man by loſing his Soul could gain the *whole World*: And if he did ſo, his Gain would be *nothing*; For, *What* would it *profit* him? The *Concluſion* he intended we ſhould draw from hence, is; how much more *fooliſh* are ſinful Men; who *loſe* their Souls, and yet, in the Exchange, gain *not the whole World* neither; nor indeed, any conſiderable *part* of it? *Generally ſpeaking*, they loſe both *their own Souls*, and the beſt part of the enjoyments even of this *preſent World* too. *They that have done wickedly*, (as it is elegantly expreſſed in the *ſecond* Book of *Eſdras*, ch. vii. 18;) *have ſuffered the ſtrait things, and yet ſhall* not *ſee the wide*; that is, they *ſuffer*, by their Folly in the *preſent* Life; and yet obtain not *That which is to come.* But *good* Men, both ſecure to themſelves *That which is to come*; and at the ſame time, (excepting *always* the caſe of *Perſecution*, which hath its *peculiar promiſes*,) they enjoy the *preſent* good things, at leaſt *equally*, with the wicked. To be particular: The *Religious* Man, *believes in God*; *worſhips*, *loves*, *fears*, *and truſts in him*: What detriment is This to his *temporal* Affairs? Nay, on the contrary, it gives him Aſſurance and Peace and Satisfaction of Mind in the whole

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courſe of his Life *here*, at the ſame time that it ſecures to him eternal Reſt *hereafter*.

He is *juſt and righteous, equitable and charitable* in his dealings with all Mankind: What loſes he by That, *at preſent?* Nay, generally it gains him *Truſt, and Confidence*; the *Love, Honour, and Eſteem*, at leaſt of Wiſe and Good Men. In the *preſent* time, the righteous is more honourable than his Neighbour; and in the *End* he attains a glorious Immortality.

He is not *covetous* to heap up inordinate Riches; but with Diligence and Frugality, with Piety and Charity, gets and uſes them: What diſadvantage is This to him in the *World?* Nay, on the contrary, by This, ſaith *Solomon*, ſhall *his barns be filled with plenty*, and *the Soul of the liberal ſhall be made fat*: The Bread that he ſcattereth upon the Waters, ſhall he find again after many days; and he lays up for himſelf, *beſides*, in *Heaven*, an incorruptible Treaſure.

Prov. iii. 10. xi. 25.

Laſtly, He moderates his *Appetites and Paſſions*, by the Rules of Reaſon and true Religion: And what damage is That to him in the *preſent* Life? Nay, generally ſpeaking, he is Maſter of *all lawful and valuable Enjoyments*; with better Health of *Body*, and more Satisfaction of *Mind*: Prov. iii. 7, 8, 17; *Fear the Lord, and depart from Evil; It ſhall be Health to thy Navel, and Marrow to thy Bones. The Ways* of Wiſdom, even in the *preſent* time, *are Pleaſantneſs, and all her Paths are Peace*; and in the *End* they lead, to *Fulneſs of Joy*, and *Pleaſures for evermore*.

On the other hand; The *wicked and debauched* perſon, either *diſbelieves* all Religion, or neglects and *deſpiſes* it; living in contempt of God, and in habitual Profanation of the Laws of his Maker: What gains he by That *Here?* Fears and Terrours, Horrour and Deſpair, Uncertainty and anxious *Doubtfulneſs* at leaſt, about what is to come hereafter. *Iſ.* lvii. 20; *The wicked are like the troubled Sea, when it cannot reſt; whoſe Waters caſt up mire and dirt; there is no Peace, ſaith my God to the wicked*: And for *This* it is, that he exchanges his Soul *hereafter*.

He is *unjuſt and uncharitable, falſe and unfaithful, cruel and oppreſſive*: What *Benefit* is This, even to his *temporal* Affairs? Generally, it brings upon him Hatred and Diſtruſt, Shame and Diſhonour, among *Men*: And for *This*, he parts with his Soul *for ever*.

He is *Covetous and inſatiable* in *Getting*, or *profligate and profuſe* in *Waſting*: What *Fruit* has he of theſe things *at preſent?* Anxiety, and no Enjoyment of what he has heaped up, *ſaving and beholding it with his Eyes*; or elſe Poverty and Want, after he has waſted it in rioting and Debauchery: And for *This* it is, that he exchanges his immortal Treaſure.

Laſtly, He is under the Dominion of ungoverned *Appetites*, diſorderly *Paſſions*, and unlawful *Pleaſures*: What Happineſs has he in this licentiouſneſs *at preſent?* Slavery and Vexation of *Mind*, always; and generally in his *Body* acute Diſeaſes, and a ſpeedy Death: *Her houſe is the way to Hell, going down to the Chambers of Death*; Prov. vii. 27: And for *This*, he parts with his Hope of future Immortality.

This *is the portion of a wicked man from God, and* This *the Heritage appointed unto him*; Job xx. 29. From all which, the Folly of chooſing the ways of Wickedneſs is ſo extremely apparent; that, as if (comparatively ſpeaking) there were *no other* Folly in the World, the Scripture with great reaſon uſes the words, *Folly and Wickedneſs*, promiſcuouſly for one and the ſame thing: And it is not a *Tautology*, but a moſt *elegant* Deſcription of the extreme Folly of Sinners, which *Solomon* gives us; Prov. xiv. 8, 24; *The Folly of Fools is Deceit, and the Fooliſhneſs of Fools is Folly*.

The *cauſe* of ſo great a Stupidity among rational Creatures *can* be nothing, but either *Unbelief* of the Government of God, and of a Judgment to come; which is contrary to all Principles of Reaſon: or elſe ſuch *extreme Careleſsneſs*, as St. *Peter* deſcribes, when he compares ſome men to *natural brute Beaſts made to be taken and deſtroyed*; 2 Pet. ii. 12: or ſuch *want of Conſideration*, as our Saviour, in the Parable of the Sower, deſcribes by a very elegant Figure, when he

he repreſents the Devil *ſtealing away* out of men's minds the Notions that had been taught them, Or elſe, laſtly, it muſt be ſuch an obſtinate *Madneſs*, in reſolving *knowingly* to preſer things temporal before eternal; as *Eſau* was a figure of, when *for one Morſel of Meat he ſold his Birthright*; or ſuch as St. *Paul* deſcribes in the 7th to the *Romans*, when he introduces a Man *doing* what he *allows not*; and *what he hates*, (that is, what his *Reaſon* hates,) he in his *Folly* does. Whenever this caſe is repreſented to a wicked man in the Perſon of *Another*, or ſet forth under the Circumſtances of a *worldly* Affair; he can hardly believe it *poſſible*, that any rational Creature ſhould act ſo abſurdly, 'Tis with him, as it was with *David*, when the Prophet *Nathan* ſurprized him, ſaying, *Thou art the Man*; or as it was with *Hazael*, when he ſaid to *Eliſha*, *Is thy Servant a Dog, that he ſhould do this thing?* SERM. XXII.

Since therefore, in *Reaſon and Speculation*, This whole matter is ſo clear and indiſputable; let us, in order more effectually to influence our *Practice*,

1*ſt*, Seriouſly and frequently *meditate*, upon the *True Weight* and *Importance* of Things; that we ſuffer not ourſelves to be deceived by *perpetual Inadvertency*, and ruined by *habitual Negligence*, after the Example of a careleſs and inconſiderate World.

2*dly*, Let us accuſtom ourſelves to conſider, *what* Notions *Other* men Now have, and we are ſure *we ourſelves* ſhall *have*, of theſe things; when the Deceits of this World ſhall be removed from before our Eyes, at the Hour of *Death*, and in the day of *Judgment*. For This is not an *imaginary*, but a real *Event*; towards which *Wiſe men* always look forward, that it may never ſurprize them unprepared.

3*dly*, Let us be Thankful to God, that, generally ſpeaking, he puts upon us no *harder* Terms of Salvation. What the Servant ſaid to *Naaman* the *Syrian*, may well be applied to *Us*: *If the Lord had bid thee do ſome Great thing, wouldſt thou not have done it? How much more when he only ſaith unto thee, waſh and be clean!* When we conſider what the *Martyrs* ſuffered of old for *Religion*, and what *Auſterities* many in the World now undergo through mere *Superſtition*; ſhall *we* think it much to mortify an unlawful Luſt, and deny ourſelves a ſinful Pleaſure, for the honour of God and the Salvation of our Souls?

4*thly* and *laſtly*; Let us conſider that the prize is worthy: Let us fortify ourſelves with reſolutions to undergo the *hardeſt* conditions Providence ſhall think fit to lay upon us; and this will enable us *chearfully* to perform the *eaſier* ones:

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Of the Neceſſity of Holineſs.

HEB. xii. 14.

Follow Peace with all men, and Holineſs, without which no Man ſhall ſee the Lord.

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THESE words contain a moſt powerful motive to *Holineſs* of life; drawn from the Conſideration of the Nature of our *Religion* and the Condition of our *Happineſs*. The abſolute and indiſpenſable Condition of *Happineſs*, is the practice of true Religion; and the true nature and eſſence of *Religion*, is Holineſs of Life: *Without Holineſs, no man ſhall ſee the Lord.*

In the words we may obſerve; 1*ſt*, A Repreſentation made, of the *true nature* of Religion, under the name or character of *Holineſs*. 2*dly*, An Exhortation given us, to put That Holineſs in Practice; (*Follow peace and* Holineſs.) 3*dly*, An Aſſurance or Connexion of Happineſs, as the proper Conſequence of ſuch Religious Practice. And 4*thly*, A Repreſentation of the nature of That Happineſs, under the Notion or Character of *Seeing God.*

From which Obſervations there naturally ariſe the following Propoſitions: 1*ſt*, That the true and ultimate Intent of all the Laws and Inſtitutions of Religion, is to make men holy. 2*dly*, That it is *poſſible* for us to be really holy, according to the true Intent and Meaning of thoſe Laws. 3*dly*, That God has made

made it the indiſpenſable Condition of our Happineſs, that we become *thus* holy. And 4*thly*, That the nature of that Happineſs is ſuch, that it is not poſſible to be enjoyed, but by thoſe who actually *are* thus holy.

I. *Firſt*; The true and ultimate Intent of all the Laws and Inſtitutions of Religion, is to make men holy. Man is a rational Creature, made capable of knowing and of obeying God, and of conforming his life to the Pattern and Imitation of the Divine Perfections. This Obedience to the Commands, and Imitation of the Nature and Life of God, is the true Eſſence of Religion. And as it is the indiſpenſable duty of all Created Beings, to *endeavour* after this Purity, ſo 'tis the higheſt Excellency and Perfection of their Nature, 'tis their greateſt poſſible Improvement to *attain* it. The greater degrees of ſuch Holineſs any Being is endued with, ſo much the higher rank does it obtain in the order of Creatures. The higheſt *Angels*, ſo much as they obey the Will of God *more entirely*, and imitate the Divine Life *more perfectly* than *men* do; ſo far are they exalted *above* Men, and have a nearer approach to the immediate Preſence and Enjoyment of God. And ſo much as *one Man* in this life arrives at a greater degree of Holineſs than another, ſo much ſhall he obtain a more excellent degree of Happineſs in that life which is to come.

To aſſiſt men in their Endeavours after this *Holineſs*, God has, *at ſundry times and in divers manners*, appointed ſeveral Forms or Inſtitutions of Religion; which we ought carefully *ſo* to diſtinguiſh from Religion itſelf, as we would do the *means* of obtaining any thing, from the *end* to be obtained. For *Religion* itſelf, is that Purity, or that virtuous Temper and Diſpoſition of Mind, which exerts itſelf in a conſtant Endeavour of being like unto God, and of obeying his Commands: But the *Inſtitution* of Religion, is only that outward Eſtabliſhment or *Form* of Worſhip, which is the Means of acquiring ſuch a Holy Diſpoſition. And theſe outward Forms, which in their own nature are changeable, have never been valued in the ſight of God, any otherwiſe than as they promoted the End they were deſigned for; *viz.* That Holineſs, which is eternally and unchangeably the ſame. This was the original Religion of Paradiſe, and before that, even of Heaven itſelf. This was the End of God's revealing himſelf to the Patriarchs, and ſeparating them from the idolatrous World. This was the End, of his giving the Law to the *Jews*; that they might be a *Holy People* unto the Lord their God. To This all their Sacrifices, all their Purifications led them; and were of no value in *compariſon with* This, but only *in order to* it. *Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord*, ſaith the Prophet, *and bow myſelf before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, and ten thouſands of rivers of oyl?* Nay, but *He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Micah. vi. 6. And whenſoever they failed of having this deſired Effect, of making the Perſons lives more holy; God declares that he even abhorred all their religious Exerciſes; *He that killeth an ox, is as if he ſlew a man; he that ſacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered ſwine's blood; and he that burneth Incenſe, as if he bleſſed an Idol; yea they have choſen their own ways, and their ſoul delighteth in their Abominations:* Iſa. lxvi. 3. And, concerning the *Chriſtian* Inſtitution it is ſtill more expreſsly evident, that the deſign of *the grace of God which bringeth ſalvation, i. e.* of the *Goſpel's appearing unto all men*, was to *Teach us that denying ungodlineſs and wordly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world.* And nothing can be a greater Contradiction, than the practice of ſuch Perſons, as hope to anſwer the deſign of Chriſtianity by any other method whatſoever, inſtead of *purifying themſelves from all filthineſs both of fleſh and ſpirit, and perfecting holineſs in the fear of God.* The Apoſtles in their Epiſtles give us ſeveral repreſentations of Religion under figurative and metaphorical Expreſſions, but all agreeing conſtantly in this; that the Subſtance and the End of all Religion, is Virtue or Holineſs of Life. Sometimes it is called the *New Man*, i. e. a being changed from Wickedneſs to

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Righteouſneſs; *Epheſ.* iv. 22. Sometimes it is called *a New Creature*; *Gal.* vi. 15; *In Chriſt Jeſus neither Circumciſion availeth any thing, nor Uncircumciſion, but a New Creature*, i. e. a Life of real Holineſs and renewed Obedience to God's Commands; For ſo the Apoſtle explains his own words expreſsly; 1 *Cor.* vii. 19; *Circumciſion is nothing, and uncircumciſion is nothing; but the keeping the commandments of God.* In ſome places, a religious life is called *Sanctification.* In other paſſages it is repreſented under the titles of *Repentance* and *Converſion*, *Regeneration* or the *New Birth*, *Purification* and *Holineſs.* All which, and many other the like Terms made uſe of in Scripture, do manifeſtly tend to this; that the Life and Subſtance, the End and Deſign of Chriſtian Religion, is, that men turn from a life of Sin unto a life of Righteouſneſs, in order to have a *Conſcience void of offence both towards God and towards Men.*

II. I proceed in the *ſecond* place to ſhow, that, as the main Deſign of Religion is to oblige men to Holineſs, ſo it is *poſſible* for us, to be really holy, according to the true Intent and Meaning of the Laws of our Religion. And indeed, ſince God is not a hard Maſter, expecting to *reap where he has not ſown*, and *to gather where he has not ſtrawed*, it cannot be conceived that he ſhould impoſe any commands on us, which it were not poſſible for us to obey. But becauſe, when we think of the infinite Purity of God, who cannot behold Iniquity; and conſider the corrupted and degenerate ſtate of humane nature; this may be apt to make us more apprehenſive than is reaſonable, of the difficulty of our Duty; it is therefore here to be obſerved particularly; 1*ſt*, That God does not ordinarily require more of us, than what a ſincere Mind, notwithſtanding the Corruption of our Nature, is well able to perform; 2*dly*, That whenſoever he requires more than this, he never fails to afford us proportionably great Aſſiſtance, to enable us to perform what he ſo requires; and *laſtly*, That if any time we are ſurprized into the Commiſſion of Sin, he accepts real Repentance and a renewed Obedience inſtead of an uninterrupted courſe of Holineſs.

1*ſt*, God does not ordinarily require more of us, than what a ſincere Mind, notwithſtanding the Corruption of our Nature, is well able to perform. The Condition of the Goſpel-covenant is not perfect unſinning Obedience, but a ſincere Endeavour to obey all the Commands of God to the utmoſt of our Power. Upon which account, St. *John* juſtly affirms, that the *commands* of God *are not grievous*; and our Saviour himſelf calls his *yoke eaſy*, and his *burden light.* What the Servant ſaid to *Naaman* the *Syrian* is very applicable upon this Argument: *My Father, if the Lord had bid thee do ſome* great *thing, wouldſt thou not have done it? how much more, when he only ſaith unto thee, Waſh and be clean!* The Commandments, in their general and moſt proper Senſe, are ſo far from being impoſſible to be obſerved, that on the contrary a man cannot eaſily tranſgreſs them, without a hardened Conſcience and deliberate Choice. But becauſe, in *ſome* particular Caſes and Circumſtances, things *more difficult* are enjoined us, ſuch as Our Saviour compares to pulling out a right eye, or cutting off a right hand; therefore I add,

2*dly*, That whenſoever God requires more of us than we are naturally able to perform, he never fails to afford us proportionably great Aſſiſtance, to enable us to perform what he ſo requires. Our Saviour aſſures us, that if a tender Mother cannot deny the Son of her love any reaſonable requeſt, much leſs *will God deny his Holy Spirit to them that ask him*; and St. *Paul* declares, that all good Chriſtians *have* the Spirit of God dwelling in them, except by their wilful Sins they quench, and grieve, and drive it from them. So that however weak and imperfect our *Nature* be, yet with this *aſſiſtance* we are ſure that the Power which is for us is greater than that which is againſt us; and a ſufficient Encouragement it is, to *work out our own ſalvation with fear and trembling, to conſider that it is God that giveth us both to will and to do of his good pleaſure*; Phil. ii. 13. There are ſome particular Temptations, which humane nature ſeems more peculiarly unable to reſiſt; and when any of theſe aſſault us, God has promiſed that he will with the Temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that

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we may be able to bear it; and that he will afford us a ſupport proportionable to the Difficulty we are obliged to encounter. The primitive Chriſtians, are a wonderful inſtance of this Truth: They were tried with the moſt cruel Tortures, that either the wit of Man could invent, or the malice of the Devil could prompt men to inflict: *They were ſtoned, they were ſawn aſunder, were tempted, were ſlain with the ſword; they wandered about in ſheep-ſkins and goat-ſkins, being deſtitute, afflicted, tormented:* Yet ſo powerfully were they ſupported by the influence of God's Holy Spirit, that they ſuffered all the Barbarities of their inhumane Perſecutors with *leſs* concern, than we can even endure to hear or to read of them. And in the caſe of the *contrary* Temptation, of great and uninterrupted *worldly Proſperity*; (which is almoſt as dangerous, and apt (by ſoftning and debaſing mens minds) to ſeduce them and withdraw them inſenſibly from their Duty, (as Perſecution is by violence to drive them from it;) concerning This, when our Saviour had affirmed, *that it is eaſier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God:* He immediately adds, *With* Men *this is impoſſible, but with* God *all things are poſſible*; i. e. By the aſſiſtance of the grace of God, which he is always ready to afford to thoſe that *believe* and deſire to *obey* his Goſpel, this temptation of great Proſperity *may* be overcome; and not only ſo, but even further, That Power and Riches which are to moſt men an occaſion of falling, may become the Matter of a more excellent Virtue, and an advantage of doing much more Good in the World. To *Us*, *humanely* ſpeaking, in a ſtate of great *Proſperity*, the Dangers are ſo great, and the Errours ſo numerous, that *That which is crooked cannot be made ſtraight, and That which is wanting cannot be numbered:* But to the grace of God revealed in the Goſpel, all things are poſſible. But

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3*dly*, If through the frailty and infirmity of our Nature, we be at any time, notwithſtanding our ſincere endeavours to the contrary, ſurprized into the commiſſion of Sin; God accepts real Repentance and a renewed Obedience, inſtead of an uninterrupted courſe of Holineſs. *If any man ſin*, ſaith St. *John*, *we have an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our Sins*; 1 John ii. 1. God takes no delight in the death of a Sinner; but uſes great forbearance and long-ſuffering towards us, that we may be led to Repentance; And if we *do* ſo ſincerely repent, as *indeed* to amend our lives and forſake our Sins, God has ſworn by himſelf that we *ſhall* live; for, *have I any pleaſure at all that the wicked ſhall die, ſaith the Lord God, and not that he ſhould rather turn from his ways and live?* Ezek. xviii. 22. With thoſe Limitations, it is abundantly evident, that as the true and only deſign of the laws of the Goſpel, is to make us holy and undefiled, ſo it *is* poſſible for us to be really holy according to the true Intent and Meaning of thoſe laws. Wherefore, as the excellent Nature and Deſign of our Religion, ſufficiently recommends it to our judgment; ſo the poſſibility of obeying it, is a moſt powerful encourgement to us, to ſet in earneſt about the practice of it. But when we muſt always conſider, that as God requires nothing *more* of us, than a ſincere obedience according to the gracious terms of the Goſpel-covenant; ſo he will not accept of any thing leſs: As it *is poſſible* for us to be holy and undefiled, according to the true intent of the laws of our Religion; ſo God has made it the *indiſpenſable* Condition of our Happineſs, that we actually and in reality become ſuch holy Perſons: Which was the

III. *Third* Head I propoſed to ſpeak to. Our Saviour by his Death and Sufferings *has* purchaſed this grace for us, that real Repentance and ſincere renewed Obedience ſhall be accepted inſtead of Innocence; but *without* this Repentance and renewed Obedience, we ſhall never be accepted upon any terms. God *has* eſtabliſhed a new and gracious Covenant with us, upon the mediation of Chriſt; but the abſolute and indiſpenſable condition of our enjoying the benefit of this new Covenant, is our ſincerely renewing our Obedience. *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord,* (ſays our Saviour,) *ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that* doeth *the will of my Father which is in Heaven.* In like manner St. *Paul*; 1 Cor. vi. 9; *Know ye not that the unrighteous ſhall*

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not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; *neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, ſhall inherit the kingdom of God.* Again; *Epheſ.* v. 6; *Let* no man deceive you with vain words, *for becauſe of theſe things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of diſobedience* even in the *Heathen-world.* And *Gal.* v. 19; *The works of the fleſh are manifeſt; of the which I tell you before, as I have alſo told you in time paſt, that they which do ſuch things, ſhall* not *inherit the kingdom of God.* So *Rev.* xxi. 27: and xxii. 15. Notwithſtanding all which moſt expreſs and repeated declarations of Holy Scripture, there are yet two ſorts of perſons eſpecially, who are very apt to deceive themſelves in this matter. The one is of thoſe, who think their *Faith* ſufficient to ſave them, without Works of Holineſs. To whom we may anſwer in the words of St. *James*; ch. ii. ver. 14; *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man ſay he hath faith, and have not works; can faith ſave him?* And this he illuſtrates by a moſt elegant ſimilitude; *ver* 15; *If a brother or ſiſter be naked and deſtitute of daily food, and one of you ſay unto them, depart in peace, be you warmed and filled; notwithſtanding ye give them not thoſe things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even ſo faith,* (ſays he) *if it hath not works, is dead being alone*; Dead, *i. e.* fruitleſs, without life or profit. But what ſaith the ſame Apoſtle? *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their Afflictions, and to keep a man's ſelf unſpotted from the world*; Jam. i. 27. The other ſort of perſons, who are very apt to deceive themſelves in this matter, are thoſe who living wickedly, yet deſign to repent before they die. And to theſe we may very well apply the Similitude of the ſame Apoſtle. If our ſaying to a poor man, Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled, (without giving him any thing to ſupply thoſe Neceſſities,) can ſatisfie his Hunger and relieve his Wants; then alſo in like manner may a dying man's *wiſhing* that he *had* ſo lived, *be indeed* living a holy life. But the folly of theſe pretences will be yet more manifeſt, if we conſider in the

IV. *Fourth* and *laſt* place, that the very *nature* itſelf of the Happineſs promiſed to holy and virtuous Men is ſuch, that it is not poſſible to be enjoyed, but by thoſe that actually *are* holy. And this the Apoſtle St. *Paul* hints to us (in the Text; *Heb.* xii. 14.) by giving us a repreſentation of that Happineſs, under the notion of *Seeing God.* And *Rev.* xxii. 4; *And they ſhall* ſee *his face, and his name ſhall be in their foreheads.* Now to *ſee God*, is not, ſeeing him as with bodily eyes; or underſtanding his metaphyſical nature; This, as no creature now *can*, ſo it is probable they never *will* be able to do. But to *ſee God*, is to be admitted into his glorious preſence, and to enjoy that Satisfaction which muſt neceſſarily ariſe, from the *contemplation* of his perfections, and from the *ſenſe* of his favour: For *in his preſence is fulneſs of joy, at his right hand there are pleaſures for evermore.* And *thus to ſee God*, neceſſarily implies a perfect love of him, and, as far as is poſſible, a *likeneſs or reſemblance* to him. For ſo St. *John* argues, in his firſt epiſtle; ch. iii. *ver.* 2; *It doth not yet appear what we ſhall be, but we know that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be* like *him*; *for we ſhall* ſee him as he is. This therefore is the Happineſs promiſed to holy and good men: They ſhall be admitted into the immediate preſence of God, and into the ſociety of Angels and of the Spirits of juſt men made perfect; *Ye are come*, ſaith St. *Paul*; Heb. xii. 22; *unto mount Sion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, and to Jeſus the Mediator of the new Covenant. They who ſhall be thought worthy to obtain that life, and the reſurrection from the dead,* ſhall for ever behold the face of God in glory, and by that bleſſed Viſion their hearts ſhall be filled with a moſt ardent *Love* of God, and their Souls ſhall be transformed into his image and *likeneſs*. And if this be the caſe; then nothing is more evident, than that this Happineſs is of ſuch a nature, as is not poſſible to be enjoyed, but by ſuch as actually *are* holy and undefiled. For what agreement can there be, between a ſenſual,

wicked,

wicked, or malicious ſoul, and the pure ſociety of the Spirits of juſt men made perfect? We ſee even in *this* life, how ungrateful the Society of good men is, to ſuch as are obſtinately and incorrigibly wicked; and as it is in *this*, ſo, much more, will it be in the *other* world. Such Perſons, as have been wholly given up to the ſinful pleaſures of a debauched world, can never be fit company for thoſe ſpiritual and refined minds, whoſe Deſires and Enjoyments are as far exalted above every thing that is groſs and ſenſual, as Heaven is above Earth: And *malicious* tempers, whoſe delight upon *Earth* was in nothing, but Hatred, Envy, and Revenge, can never converſe in *Heaven* with thoſe bleſſed Spirits, who feed and live upon no other pleaſures, but thoſe of Goodneſs, Holineſs, and Love. Again, what can be more impoſſible, than for wicked and debauched minds to be made happy by the Viſion and Fruition of God, who is Purity and Holineſs itſelf? Salvation, muſt be begun *here:* Grace and Glory, are but different degrees of one and the ſame State: and it is a very remarkable expreſſion of Scripture, according to the true rendering of the Original, that *God adds to the Church daily*, not *ſuch as* ſhould be, but *ſuch as* are *ſaved*. So that unleſs God ſhould work a miracle for profane perſons, and when he removes them into another world, ſhould transform them alſo into new Creatures; it is no more poſſible for *Them* to enjoy the Happineſs of Heaven, than for *Body* to enjoy the pleaſures of *Spirit*, or for *Darkneſs* to have communion and agreement with *Light*. I will not preſume to affirm, (though ſome have done it, not without appearance of Reaſon,) that if God ſhould tranſplant ſuch perſons into Heaven, he *could* not make them happy there; but ſo long as they are thus exceedingly indiſpoſed for it, nothing is more certain than that he *never will*: For, *without Holineſs, no man ſhall ſee the Lord.*

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Holineſs of Life the moſt acceptable Sacrifice to GOD.

ROM. xii. 1.

I beſeech you, therefore, Brethren, by the Mercies of God, that ye preſent your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God; which is your reaſonable Service.

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THE Apoſtle St. *Paul* in the former part of this Epiſtle, having ſhown that the *Gentiles* by departing from the Law of *Nature*, and the *Jews* by tranſgreſſing the Law of *Moſes*, had both of them become obnoxious to the Wrath of God; from thence infers the obligation incumbent upon *Both*, to have recourſe to the Grace and Mercy of the *Goſpel*, by believing in *Chriſt*, and returning to God in *That way* of Faith and Repentance, which the Apoſtles were ſent forth to preach both unto *Jews* and *Gentiles*. Againſt This great Doctrine of the Goſpel, the *Gentiles* had nothing material to object, any further than as the antient Cuſtoms of their Forefathers, and the habitual Corruption of their own Manners, made them unwilling to reform. But the *Jews*, to whoſe Anceſtors God had made ſingular Promiſes of *eternal* Bleſſings, and to whom (as a peculiar People or Nation) he

he had been pleaſed to give a *particular Law* by immediate Revelation; Theſe were extremely averſe to believe, that he would ever put an end to That Inſtitution, and receive the *Gentiles* to his Mercy in common with the *Jews*; nay, and *reject* the Nation of the *Jews*, for not receiving the Goſpel in common with the *Gentiles*. To remove this Great Prejudice therefore; the Apoſtle from the *third chapter* of this Epiſtle to the end of the *Eleventh*, argues with ſingular ſtrength and earneſtneſs, that the Great Father of the *Jewiſh* Nation, even *Abraham* himſelf, received the Promiſes of God, not upon account of the *Law*, which was not then given; nor upon account of the Seal of *Circumciſion*, which had not as yet been commanded him; but upon account of the *like Faith*, and the *like obedience*, as was afterwards required by the *Goſpel*. That as God, the Maker and Lord of all, had an undoubted Right to *chuſe* the *Poſterity of Abraham* to be his peculiar People and the Standard of true Religion, without doing thereby Any Wrong or Injury to the reſt of Mankind; ſo he had evidently the very ſame Right, whenever he pleaſed, to *remove* again That partition-wall, and admit the *Gentiles* to be Partakers of the ſame external Advantages with the *Jews*; nay, and to *caſt off* the *Jews* for refuſing That Method of Salvation, which he had *now* commanded to be preached equally to *All*. *Laſtly*, the Apoſtle argues, that in *all* theſe various diſpenſations of Providence, the *Deſign* of God was merciful towards *All Men*; leading them, by the Motives both of Severity and Goodneſs, to Repentance and Reformation of Life. Caſting off the *Jews* for their impenitency, and offering mercy to the *Gentiles*; intending finally, through the Fulneſs of the *Gentiles*, to bring in alſo the *Jews* again. For *ſo* he ſums up his *whole* Argument; ch. xi. 30; *As* Ye *in times paſt have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through* Their *Unbelief*; *even ſo have* Theſe *alſo now not believed, that through* your *mercy* they *alſo may obtain mercy*: *For God hath concluded them* all *in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon All*; *O the depth of the riches both of the Knowledge and wiſdom of God! how unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!*

Having thus concluded his *Argument*, he proceeds in the words of the Text, according to his uſual Method in all his Epiſtles, to draw an *inference of Exhortation* from what he had before ſaid, to perſwade Men to the Practice of Virtue and Righteouſneſs. *I beſeech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye preſent your Bodies a Living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God; which is your reaſonable Service.*

I beſeech you Therefore: The word, *Therefore*, ſhows the *connexion* of the *preſent* exhortation, with his *foregoing* Argument. God in *all* the diſpenſations of his Providence, both in the *merciful* and in the *ſevere* parts of it, has ſet forth to us the Neceſſity of Repentance and Amendment; Therefore, (ſays he) *I beſeech you, brethren*, let This Conſideration have its due effect upon you, that you neither deſpiſe his Mercy, nor provoke his Severity.

And becauſe the *finiſhing point* in which his Argument terminates, is the obſervation, that *all* the Great Diſpenſations of Providence are with unſearchable Wiſdom deſigned finally to iſſue in Events of *Mercy*; (God *hath concluded All in Unbelief, that he might have* Mercy *upon All*:) for This reaſon it is with great Eloquence of affection, that the Apoſtle lays the Streſs of his Exhortation upon *That* particular Motive: *I beſeech you therefore, brethren, by the* Mercies *of God*. The like expreſſion he again uſes, 2 *Cor.* x. 1; *I beſeech you by the Meekneſs and Gentleneſs of Chriſt*. His Senſe, in Both places is: Let the Mercy and Goodneſs of God, manifeſted and declared to you by the Goſpel of Chriſt, prevail with you to live as *becometh* the Goſpel, to live *worthy* of the Grace and Benefits ye have received.

That *ye preſent your Bodies*, (that is, *yourſelves*,) *a* living Sacrifice; a Sacrifice as much more valuable in the Sight of God, than the Sacrifice of Beaſts offered up upon the Altar, as a *Man* is more valuable than an *irrational Animal*; as a Living *Man* is more valuable, than a *ſlain Beaſt*; as the Moral *Perfections* of a Man, are more excellent than a *Sacrifice free from mere* natural *Blemiſhes of*

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the Body; as, laſtly, the *thing ſignified itſelf*, is always preferable to a *Mere Repreſentation*. That ye preſent yourſelves unto God, ſuch a *Living Sacrifice* as This; Holy, not with a mere *legal*, *external*, *nominal* Holineſs, conſiſting purely in things being *ſet apart* (by *conſecration* or *ſolemn denomination* only) to ſuch or ſuch particular Uſes; but Holy, by a *real*, *moral*, *intrinſick* Sanctity, of which the *Legal* Holineſs, was but a Type or a Shadow: Holy, by *real Purity* and *Goodneſs of Manners*; in the Senſe wherein *He* is *Holy*, who is of *purer eyes than to behold iniquity*; Holy, in this *true and ſpiritual* Senſe; And conſequently, as the Text goes on, acceptable *unto God*; acceptable, not merely by Virtue of *inſtitution and Command*; but acceptable in the *nature of the* thing itſelf; acceptable, as being in *Agreeableneſs and Conformity* to the *Nature of* God; acceptable, as being a fulfilling of the *eſſential and unchangeable Law of everlaſting* Righteouſneſs. For *thus* even the Light of *Reaſon* taught the Wiſer *Heathens*, that by *No Offering* could God be ſo acceptably worſhipped, as by the Oblation of a *Heart* free from *Unrighteouſneſs and Iniquity*. *Thus* alſo the *Prophets* among the *Jews*, in order to draw That People, as they were able, to a rational notion of Religion; *Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and Sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than Sacrifice; and to hearken, than the Fat of Rams.* And *Thus* likewiſe our *Saviour himſelf*, who came to reſtore the Purity of uncorrupted Religion; *Thou art not far*, ſays he, *from the Kingdom of God*; expreſſing his High Approbation of a certain Scribe's profeſſion, that for a Man *to Love God with all his Heart, and his Neighbour as himſelf, is more than all whole Burnt-offerings and Sacrifice.*

In the *laſt* place therefore, the Apoſtle adds, as a *concluſion* of his *whole* Exhortation in the Text; that This ſpiritual Sacrifice, this Moral Purity and Holineſs of Life, is our Reaſonable Service: Reaſonable, in point of *Gratitude*; upon account of what he had before alledged concerning the *Mercies of God*, or the merciful and gracious Diſpenſations of his Providence towards Men: Reaſonable, in the *nature* of *Things*; as being *in itſelf* of Eternal and unchangeable Obligation: Reaſonable, with regard to the nature of *God*; who is a Being of eſſential Purity and Holineſs: and Reaſonable, with Regard to the nature of *Men*; as being the *Proper* Duty and Service, of *Rational* Creatures.

The words of the Text being thus explained; the principal *Particulars* therein, which deſerve to be more largely and diſtinctly conſidered, are; *1ſt*, Whence it comes to paſs, that the Apoſtle here expreſſes our *whole* Chriſtian Duty, by the *particular* phraſe of preſenting our Bodies Holy, acceptable unto God: and *2dly*, What is the full intent, of his ſtiling this our Service *a Living* Sacrifice.

I. *Firſt*; Whence comes it to paſs, that the Apoſtle here expreſſes our *whole* Chriſtian Duty, by the *particular* phraſe of preſenting our Bodies Holy, acceptable unto God? He does not ſay, preſent *yourſelves*, but your *Bodies*, a living Sacrifice, Holy, acceptable unto God. Now the reaſon of This, ſeems to be, that having in the *former* part of this Epiſtle deſcribed the great *depravity* and *corruption* of manners among the *unbelieving Gentiles*, *principally* in the inſtance of thoſe Works of the Fleſh, to which God had judicially given them up as a conſequence of their groſs Idolatries, ſo contradictory to the plain Light of Nature and Reaſon; in the *latter* part of the epiſtle he accordingly *ſuits* his Exhortation to the *converted* Gentiles, to *purify themſelves from all filthineſs both of* Fleſh *and Spirit*, *perfecting Holineſs in the Fear of God*; and that, in the *firſt* place, they ſhould be ſure to cleanſe themſelves from thoſe *Works of the Fleſh*, which were the Great Cauſe of God's Anger even againſt the Heathen World; and by forſaking of which, they might in a particular manner be ſaid to preſent their *Bodies* a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. The Sins of *This* kind, are what ought not indeed to be once *named* among Chriſtians: *Eph.* v. 3; *Fornication and all uncleanneſs, let it not be once* named *amongſt you, as becometh Saints, neither filthineſs, nor fooliſh talking, nor*

jeſting,

jesting, which are not convenient; but rather, giving of Thanks: For This ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ, and of God: Let no man deceive you with vain words; For because of these things, cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience; or, as it is in the margin, upon the children of *Unbelief*; that is, even upon the *Heathen world* itself. Where, by the way it is very observable, that the *Apostle*, speaking of the *Heathen-nations*, does not say, as Some in *latter* Ages have done, that their being *ignorant in Unbelief* is the cause of all their Actions being sinful and displeasing to God; but, on the contrary, that the Sinfulness and Wickedness of their *Actions*, in opposition to That degree of Light they enjoy; is the true and only cause, of their being hateful to God: *For because of* These *things* (says he,) *cometh the Wrath of God upon the Children of Unbelief.* Now if among those who *knew not God*, that is, who had no *express Revelation*, nor *any other* Declaration of the Will of God, than what the mere Light of *Nature and Reason* afforded; if among *These* (I say,) all Sins of This kind were so justly punishable; how much more among *Christians*; whom (as the Apostle expresses it) God hath called *unto Holiness*, that is, has by a *particular* Revelation, by *peculiar* Promises, and by *extraordinary* Assistances, appointed to be unto himself a *chosen generation, a royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation, a peculiar people*! For, *This is the Will of God*, 1 Th. iv. 3; *this is the will of God, even your Sanctification; That every one of you may know how to possess* himself *in Sanctification and Honour: Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:* — *Because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we have also forewarned you and testified:* —*He therefore that despiseth not Man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit. Given unto us his* Holy Spirit: That is, has given us all the extraordinary *Motives*, and all the peculiar *Assistances* and *Advantages* of the *Gospel*, in order to our *Sanctification.* Insomuch that the same Apostle, by a very elegant and expressive similitude, stiles the *Bodies* of Christians, *Temples of God*, and *Temples of the Holy Ghost*; and from thence draws a strong and affecting argument, to perswade them to the Virtues of Sobriety and Holiness. *Know ye not* (says he) *that ye are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the Temple of God, him shall God destroy; For the Temple of God is Holy, which Temple ye are.* And again: *Know ye not that your Body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a Price; Therefore glorify God* (*glorify the Lord who bought you* with the precious blood of his dear Son; glorify him) *in your Body, and in your Spirit, which are God's*: (1 Cor. vi. 19.) In *very corrupt* and *degenerate* Ages of the World, there will always be *Some profligate* persons, who will pretend indeed they cannot *discern* the Great *Wickedness and Immorality* of some of the Practices against which these Exhortations are directed; as (they must needs confess,) they evidently enough do, in the Instances of Many *Other* sorts of Crimes. But how unwilling soever they are to *perceive, wherein* lies the heinous nature of these Vices, when they are the *guilty persons themselves*; yet they are always very sensible of it, when they *themselves suffer* by the Guilt of *Others*; when any Dishonour of this kind is done to their *own Families*, or even to *remote Relations. Then* they see plainly, how destructive all these Debaucheries are, to Humane Society, and to the publick Welfare; how irreconcileable they are with All Serious Thoughts, and worthy Actions; how they cover men with Shame, and Baseness of Spirit; how they separate the earnest and most close Relations, lay a ground for inextricable confusions and implacable Dissensions in Families, and very frequently occasion Murders, Seditions and publick Devastations: So that hardly from *Any Other* Cause, have sprung such *Tragical* and calamitous Events, as from the Sins and Debaucheries of *This* sort. *One* part of these ill consequences, is excellently described by *Solomon*; Prov. vi. 32; vii. 22; *He that doth* these things, *destroyeth his Own Soul: A wound and dishonour shall he get, and his Reproach shall not be wiped away. He goeth after a strange woman, as an Ox goeth to the Slaughter, or as a Fool to the correction of the Stocks; 'Till a dart strike through his Liver; as a*

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Bird haſteth to the ſnare, and knoweth not that it is for his Life.—— For *her houſe is the way to Hell, going down to the Chambers of Death.* This is an Argument drawn from the *natural Tendency* of things, and from the Wiſe *Obſervations* which *Solomon* had made upon the Courſe of the World, and upon the Ways and Practices of Men. But the Argument is *doubly* enforced, by the conſiderations of the *Goſpel*, which, to the general Motives of *Nature and Reaſon*, has added this *further* peculiar Obligation, great and more powerful than all; that having a Promiſe given us of an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled in the Heavens, we are now, as *Strangers and Pilgrims* in this preſent World, required to reſtrain all inordinate Deſires which *war againſt the Soul*; that is, which would tempt men to exchange their *eternal Happineſs* for the *tranſient and momentary pleaſures of Sin*: Heb. xii. 16; *Leſt there be Any* Fornicator, *or profane perſon as Eſau, who for one morſel of meat ſold his Birthright*; *For ye know that afterwards, when he would have inherited the Bleſſing, he was rejected; for he found no place of Repentance, though he ſought it carefully with Tears.* The Meaning is; not that True Repentance, which produces real Amendment and effectual Reformation of Manners, will ever be rejected; but that, at the time of Judgment, when the Bleſſing comes to be inherited, and they who have ſold their Hopes of it for the Pleaſures of Sin, ſhall ſay, *Lord, Lord, open unto us*; then will our Lord reply, *I know you not whence ye are, Depart from Me all ye Workers of Iniquity.* I conclude *This* head therefore with That excellent exhortation of St. *Paul*; Rom. xiii. 12; *Let us caſt off the Works of Darkneſs, and put upon us the Armour of Light*: *Let us walk honeſtly as in the day*, (that is, as becometh thoſe who enjoy the Light of the Goſpel;) *not in rioting and drunkenneſs, not in chambering and wantonneſs, not in ſtrife and envying*; *But put ye on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, (that is, live as becomes the Diſciples of Chriſt,) *and make no proviſion for the fleſh, to fulfil the Luſts thereof.*

II. *Secondly*; That which remains, is, to conſider in the *next* place, what is the true and full Intent of that *Other* Phraſe the Apoſtle uſes in the Text; when this Duty of *preſenting our Bodies Holy, acceptable unto God*, is here ſtiled by him a *Living* Sacrifice. For the clear underſtanding the Ground of which Expreſſion, it is to be obſerved, that the proper Puniſhment of Sin being *Death*, and yet God reſolving to have Mercy on ſuch as ſhould repent and amend; he thought proper, in the Wiſdom of his Government, to declare and eſtabliſh, to confirm and ratify this Covenant of Mercy, by the *Sacrifice* of the *Death of Chriſt* once offered for ever. As a *Type* of which, and as an *Emblem* of the true Demerit of Sin, and as the Sinner's *Acknowledgment* of his Guilt, and Profeſſion of Repentance; God was pleaſed, in the early Ages of the World, to accept the *ſacrificing* of Beaſts. In which matter, when impartially conſidered, it cannot be ſaid there was any thing unworthy of God. For ſince they are all, creatures which God has *freely* created, and *freely* given them *Life*; ſince they are moreover created *neceſſarily ſubject* to *Death*; and fitted in the very *Courſe* and original *Deſign* of their nature, to be ſlain for Food, to *Men* and to *each other*; it cannot be ſaid there is any thing *incongruous*, in their having been appointed to be uſed as *Sacrifices* in the Service of *God*. Nevertheleſs, ſince theſe Sacrifices were never in any *other* reſpect acceptable unto God, but merely as *Figures* and *Shadows*; as *Types* of *Chriſt*, and as Acknowledgments or Profeſſions of the Sinner's *Repentance*; it is evident, that from the *Beginning*, the real and true Sacrifice moſt pleaſing to God, always was the *perſon's* dedicating *himſelf* to the *Service* of God, by ſuch a *Death unto Sin*, as the *ſlaying* of the Sacrifice repreſented; and by ſuch *Amendment of Life* for the future, as was typically ſignified by the Sacrifice being *without Blemiſh*. From whence, even in the *Old Teſtament*, the Prophet, ſpeaking comparatively, *Behold*, ſays he, *to Obey is better than Sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of Rams.* The Pſalmiſt likewiſe, *Thou deſireſt not ſacrifice*, ſays he, *elſe would I give it thee, but thou delighteſt not in burnt-offerings*: *The Sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit, a broken and contrite heart, (O God) thou wilt not deſpiſe.* And under the *New Teſtament*, That *ſpiritual* Worſhip, and That *Chriſtian* Practice of Moral Duties, which

which ſucceeded in the place of *literal* Sacrifices, is hence very elegantly ſtiled *A Sacrifice* or *Offering*. By *Malachi*, it is *before-hand* ſtiled *prophetically*, a *Pure-Offering*; ch. i. 11. By the *Apoſtle*, *after its* eſtabliſhment, it is called a *Spiritual Sacrifice*; an *odour of a ſweet ſmell, a ſacrifice acceptable, well-pleaſing to God*; (Phil. iv. 18.) And in the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*; ch xiii. 15; we are Thus exhorted; *By Him therefore*, that is, By or Through Chriſt, *let us offer the* Sacrifice of Praiſe *to God continually, that is the Fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his Name*: Alſo *to do good and to communicate, forget not*; *for with ſuch* Sacrifices *God is well-pleaſed*. From which *manner of ſpeaking*, it is very obvious to obſerve, by the Way; how abſurdly ſome *Modern* Writers, from the *Antients* ſtiling the *Euchariſt* an *unbloody Sacrifice*, have inferred that it is in *ſome real and* literal Senſe a *Sacrifice*: Whereas the *Antients*, on the contrary, uſed the word *Sacrifice* in the ſame Senſe here, as the *Apoſtle* calls *Praiſe* and *Works of Charity* a *Sacrifice*; nay, in the ſame Senſe, as by a ſtill more ſublime figure, he ſays of *Chriſtians*, Phil. iii. 3; that *We are the Circumciſion*; That is, that *Chriſtians* are by real *Holineſs purified* unto God a *peculiar people*, more truly than the *Jews* were by the typical *Ceremony* of *Circumciſion*.

Laſtly, The Moral Purity and Virtue of ſincere Chriſtians, is in the Text ſtiled, not only a *Sacrifice*, but a Living *Sacrifice*; to expreſs more emphatically, how much the Service of a *rational living perſon* is more valuable in the Sight of God, than the Sacrifice of a *ſlain Beaſt*. By the ſame Analogy of Speech, Chriſtians are ſtiled by St. *Peter*, *Living Stones*, 1 Pet. ii. 5; to ſignify their being parts of That *Spiritual* Building or Temple of God, which is his *Church* or the Whole Body of his Faithful Servants, much more precious in his Sight than any Temple literally built with hands. After the ſame manner *Chriſt*, in oppoſition to the *Jews typical* Approach to God in the Holy Place through the Veil of the Temple, is ſtiled a *New and* Living *Way*; Heb. x. 20. And in general, *all outward Forms and Ceremonies* whatſoever, are in Scripture called a *dead letter*; in compariſon with the *Spirit* and *reality* of true *Virtue and Righteouſneſs*. Which *real Virtue and Righteouſneſs* in the whole courſe of mens lives, is, in the fulleſt and moſt complete Senſe of the phraſe, *preſenting themſelves unto God a* Living *Sacrifice*: Rom. vi. 11, 13; *Reckon ye yourſelves* ſays the Apoſtle, (with which exhortation I ſhall conclude,) *Reckon ye yourſelves to be* dead *indeed unto ſin, but* alive *unto God, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord*;—*yielding yourſelves unto God, as thoſe that are* alive *from the dead*; *and your members as inſtruments of righteouſneſs unto God*.

SERMON XXV.

Of the unchangeable Difference of Good and Evil.

ISAI. v. 20.

Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs; that put bitter for ſweet and ſweet for bitter.

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THE reaſonableneſs of Religion, is the great condemnation of Sinners; and the Folly of Wickedneſs is moſt evidently reproved, by ſhowing it to be contrary both to the Nature of *Man* and to the Reaſon of *Things*, as well as to the poſitive Will and Command of God. The Diſtinction of Moral Actions is in itſelf as neceſſary and as manifeſt, as the Differences of natural and ſenſible Objects; and it is a greater and juſter reproach to the Underſtanding of a Man, not to diſcern theſe *its* proper Objects; than it is a weakneſs and defect in the Organs of the Senſes, not to diſtinguiſh Theirs. Light and Darkneſs are ſo abſolutely contrary to each other, and Sweetneſs ſo ſenſibly different from Bitter, that no man can miſtake or confound theſe things, without having wholly loſt the uſe of thoſe Senſes, by which they were intended to be diſcerned. Pain and Pleaſure are ſo directly oppoſite, that nothing leſs than the loſs of Life itſelf,

ſelf, can make us inſenſible of *Them*, or hinder us from preferring the one, and avoiding the other. Moral Good and Evil, Virtue and Vice, the Happineſs and the Diſeaſes of the Mind, are as truly and as widely different in their own nature; as the Perceptions of our outward Senſes: And God has endued us with Faculties of the Soul as well fitted to diſtinguiſh them, as the Bodily Senſes are to diſcern corporeal Objects. If any man, notwithſtanding this, will obſtinately call Evil Good, and Good Evil, and will deny all Diſtinction between Virtue and Vice; he muſt as much have laid aſide the uſe of his natural Reaſon and Underſtanding, the Judgment and Diſcernment of his mind; as he that would confound Light and Darkneſs, muſt contradict his Senſes, and deny the Evidence of his cleareſt Sight. And when ſuch a perſon falls finally into unavoidable Miſery and the juſt Puniſhment of Sin, he will no more deſerve Pity and Compaſſion, than one that falls down a Precipice becauſe he would not open his Eyes to diſcern that Light, which ſhould have guided and directed him in his way. Miſery and Deſtruction muſt neceſſarily be the effect of neglecting thoſe Rules, on which both God and Nature have made the Life and Happineſs of the Soul to depend; as certainly as the Deſtruction of the *Body* muſt be the ſpeedy Conſequence of neglecting the difference between things wholſome and poiſonous. and ſo much the more deſerved and the leſs pitiable is the Deſtruction of wilful and impenitent Sinners, by how much the clearer the difference is between Good and Evil; and by how much the more obſtinately they muſt ſhut their Eyes, that they may not ſee the ſtrong Light of Reaſon and Conſcience, the Excellency and Neceſſity of Virtue, and the plain and only way to true Happineſs. *Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil, that put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs; that put bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter.* SERM. XXV.

In the following Diſcourſe upon which words, I ſhall endeavour to ſhow, 1*ſt*, That there is originally in the very *Nature* of things, a neceſſary and eternal Dfference between Good and Evil, between Virtue and Vice; which the Reaſon of things does itſelf oblige men to have a conſtant Regard to. 2*dly*, That God, by his ſupreme and abſolute Authority, and by expreſs Declaration of his Will in Holy Scripture, has eſtabliſhed and confirmed this original Difference of things; and will ſupport and maintain it by his immediate Power and Government in the World. And 3*dly*, I ſhall draw ſome Obſervations from the whole, which may be of uſe to us in Practice.

I. *Firſt*; There is originally in the very Nature of things, a neceſſary and eternal Difference between Good and Evil, between Virtue and Vice; which the Reaſon of things does itſelf oblige men to have a conſtant Regard to. This is *ſuppoſed* in the Text, by the Prophet's comparing the Difference between Good and Evil, to that moſt obvious and ſenſible Difference of Light and Darkneſs. And it is not without great Reaſon, that he ſuppoſes this Difference of Good and Evil to be ſo plain and ſelf-evident, as if it could not be proved by any thing more clear and manifeſt than itſelf. For in like manner as any man, who ſhould be ſo abſurd as to contend, that there was no Difference between Light and Darkneſs; could not be confuted by any Argument more ſtrong, than the Evidence of his own Senſes: So to any one who will perverſely deny all Difference between Good and Evil, it is not eaſy to offer any better Argument, to convince him of this great and fundamental Truth; than by appealing to the Reaſon and Conſcience of his own Mind. Not becauſe there is any real Difficulty or Obſcurity in the Thing itſelf to be proved; but on the contrary, becauſe it is ſo very plain and evident, that ſcarcely any foreign Argument can by the ſtricteſt Proof make it more clear and certain than it was before. When Men will deny a Truth, which is as evident, as the Difference between Light and Darkneſs; Puniſhment then is the only proper remedy for ſuch Obſtinacy; and very juſtly may thoſe Men be excluded from all the Benefits of humane Society, who will not have any regard to that Difference of things, on which alone all the Happineſs of Society depends. *Natural* Good and Evil, in ſuch inſtances wherein we are perſonally con-

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cerned, and where the Effect is not very remote, we are always ſufficiently ſenſible of, and abundantly able and careful to diſtinguiſh. Death and Life, Sickneſs and Health, Pleaſure and Pain, Poverty and Riches, Honour and Diſgrace, are Differences of condition, concerning which there is no diſpute, and no danger that men will be careleſs or negligent. Death and Life, Pain and Pleaſure, Happineſs and Miſery, Men cannot but diſtinguiſh; and muſt of neceſſity always purſue the one, and endeavour to avoid the other. Yet in theſe very things is originally founded the Difference of *Moral* Good and Evil, which they are ſo apt to neglect; and it is only for want of attending to the Iſſues and Conſequences of things, that men are ever guilty of ſo fatal a Miſtake. That which tends truly and univerſally, to the Perfection of humane Nature, and to the general Happineſs of Mankind; is Moral Good, as well as Natural: And moral Evil, is that which corrupts and depraves and diſhonours our Nature, and renders it truly miſerable; which diſquiets mens Minds, and weakens their Bodies; which ruins their Eſtates, and deſtroys their Reputation; which breaks Laws, and diſturbs good Government, and diſorders and confounds the World. Theſe reſpective Effects are ſometimes remote indeed, and at a diſtance; and This is that which deceives and impoſes upon Men: But they are nevertheleſs moſt certain, and neceſſary Effects; and of direct, proper, and natural conſequence: So that even in Nature, Virtue and Vice, Wiſdom and Folly, are as neceſſarily diſtinct, and as unalterable as Happineſs and Miſery themſelves. God hath ſo conſtituted our Nature, that the ſame things which truly and univerſally promote our Happineſs, are likewiſe the chief Inſtances of our Duty; and the univerſal performance of our Duty; is plainly the moſt natural and direct means to attain true and laſting Happineſs. The Accidents of this World, and the extreme Wickedneſs of Men, make it ſometimes indeed prove otherwiſe for a ſhort Seaſon: But the *final* Event of things, is always ſuch as I have now deſcribed; and the Order of Nature *tends* to make it be ſo likewiſe, even in all the *preſent* intermediate ſpaces of time. The Fear and Love of God, the Imitation of his Nature, and the Obeying of his Commands the Senſe of *His* preſent and future Favour, who is the ſupreme Lord and infinitely powerful Governour of the whole World; is evidently the only foundation of ſolid Peace and Satisfaction of Mind, in which a rational and immortal Spirit can poſſibly acquieſce: Piety therefore towards God, is as neceſſarily good in itſelf, and of as unchangeable Obligation in Nature and Reaſon; as the Creator is of neceſſity infinitely ſuperiour to his Creatures; and as ſettled peace and ſatisfaction of Mind, which can only ariſe from the ſenſe of *his* Favour, is neceſſarily the ground and condition of our Happineſs. Temperance and Sobriety, Diligence and Patience, the due government of our Appetites, and reſtraint of our Paſſions, are the only *natural and moſt certain* means of preſerving the health of our Bodies, of improving the faculties of our Minds, and of keeping ourſelves conſtantly in ſuch Temper and Diſpoſition, as is neceſſary to qualify us for the regular performance of all other Duties of Life. He that ſuffers himſelf to be deprived of his Reaſon, either by violent Paſſion, or by great Intemperance and Exceſs, has no guard left, that can ſecure him from falling into the greateſt Crimes. Such government of ourſelves therefore, is as neceſſarily good and obligatory in the nature of the Thing itſelf, as it is confeſſedly uſeful and excellent in its Effects. Juſtice and Righteouſneſs, Goodneſs and Charity, Faithfulneſs and Truth, Subjection to Government, Obedience to Laws, due Reſpect to Authority, according to mens ſeveral Qualities and Stations in the World; are the only poſſible Means, of preſerving the Peace and Welfare of the Publick, the Order of Societies, and mutual Protection and Support; on which depends all our Happineſs, all our Enjoyments, and whatſoever is moſt valuable amongſt men: Theſe things therefore are as unchangeably Wiſe and Good, and the practice of them as indiſpenſably enforced upon us by the eternal Reaſon of things, and of as indiſpenſable Obligation; as it is natural and neceſſary for us to deſire both our own private Happineſs, and the publick Welfare of Mankind. Wicked and unreaſonable Men, who will

will be governed by no rule, but their preſent Appetites; look not ſo far before them, as to make true judgments and take right meaſures concerning their proper Happineſs. Whatever gratifies their preſent Luſt or Paſſion, That they chuſe as Good and conducive to their Happineſs; not conſidering that in the courſe of things it may be the greateſt Evil in the world, either directly to themſelves, or conſequentially by being injurious to other Men, deſtructive of publick Peace, and Order, and Government, and ſo in the end pernicious even in this preſent World to themſelves alſo. For want of this Conſideration it is, that they confound the natural and eternal Differences of things; judging of Good and Evil, by no other meaſure, but by their own ſudden Paſſions, changeable Appetites, diſorderly and unreaſonable Luſts. If they get beyond this, and are forced to confeſs that the Neceſſity of things, the very Nature and Conſtitution of the world, leſt every thing ſhould run immediately into the utmoſt Confuſion, obliges them to be under ſome kind of Rules and Reſtraints; yet, far from having any generous and noble Principles of true Virtue and Goodneſs, they will go no further than they are compelled, nor acknowledge any other Difference between Good and Evil, than what is forced upon them by the Authority of Law or Cuſtom. And yet concerning Theſe alſo, it is as evident, that Good and Evil, are things prior and ſuperiour to all humane Laws, and which they cannot alter; as that the Difference of Light and Darkneſs does not depend upon the Will and Pleaſure of men; and cannot be changed by them. The true and only Reaſon of all humane Laws, is to enforce and ſecure the practice of ſuch things, as are before in their own Nature good, and uſeful, and profitable to Society. For, if this were not the caſe, it would not be of any importance, whether theſe or the very contrary practices were enjoyned by Laws. It is not therefore barely the Force and Obligation of the Law, which makes a thing become good and reaſonable to be practiſed; though in all indifferent things, This is indeed a ſufficient Obligation;) but it is the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of the Things themſelves, that is the Ground and Foundation of all wiſe Laws; and which makes it neceſſary, that Men ſhould by Authority and by Laws be compelled to do that, which if there had been no Law at all, it would nevertheleſs have been reaſonable and good for them to do. We are infinitely obliged by Nature and Reaſon, to worſhip God and adore, to pray and to give thanks, to the Supreme Author and Preſerver of our Being; and to do all the Good we can to Men, in our ſeveral Stations; promoting univerſally the Happineſs of our Fellow-creatures, and the Peace and good Order of the World. It is fit the Fear and Authority of Laws, ſhould prevent ſuch Men from oppoſing and hindering this great End, who perhaps would not otherwiſe be reſtrained by the Obligation of right Reaſon, or by the Fear of God: But the Obligation of right Reaſon would ſtill have been the ſame, though no humane Laws had laid any ſuch Compulſion upon Men: Nay even, if it could be ſuppoſed that all poſitive Laws and all humane Authority whatſoever, ſhould require us to act the contrary part; deſtroy and do all evil to each other without difference or reſpect; If all the Nations in the World, ſhould conſpire in having ſuch a Falſe Notion of Honour and Glory, as to account it truer greatneſs to deſtroy and ruin, than to protect Mankind and preſerve the Liberties of Nations, and the common Rights of humane Soeieties; yet it would neither be wiſe, nor good, nor reaſonable, neither truly great nor honourable ſo to do; any more than Men's agreeing to call poiſon wholſome, would make it really be ſo; or the opinion or declaration of any number of Men, could make Darkneſs put on the Nature of Light. Wicked and unreaſonable Men, powerful Tyrants and Oppreſſors, the greateſt Debauchees and Purſuers of unlawful Pleaſures; when they are above the cenſure of all humane Laws, and have little or no reverence for thoſe that are divine; yet often know that they do evil, and cannot deny but that it would be better to do otherwiſe. They are ſenſible that the practice of Virtue and Goodneſs, is infinitely more reaſonable than Debauchery and Injuſtice; And though their Luſts and Paſſions have ſuch Dominion over them, that they

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cannot forbear doing unjuſt and unrighteous Actions; yet they ſee at the ſame time a more excellent Law, they know better things, and cannot but approve them as more wiſe and reaſonable. This is a true Obligation upon them to return into the ways of Virtue and Religion: The Senſe of this Obligation they cannot get rid of; the Uneaſineſs which it gives their Minds, they cannot ſhake off: It is This makes them paſs a ſevere Judgment upon their own paſt Actions, whenever they reflect on them; and to chuſe even the preſent Pleaſure or unjuſt Acquiſitions with difficulty and remorſe: The reproach of Conſcience imbitters all their ſinful Enjoyments; and they ſecretly condemn themſelves, where the Laws of Men have no Power to condemn them. The crimes they commit are a continual ſlavery and burden upon their Minds. And were it not, that evil Habits and ungoverned Luſts keep them by an unwilling choice in a perpetual bondage; they would infinitely rather chuſe the Satisfaction of being innocent, and wiſh always that they could ſeparate the Pleaſure or Profit from the Crime. The Actions of Men that live virtuouſly and religiouſly, they cannot but approve of; and condemn in others the very ſame Practices, which they are guilty of themſelves. They will truſt a virtuous man in any buſineſs of importance, much rather than the promoters and partakers of their Vices; and deſire always to have their affairs managed, by men of Uprightneſs, Righteouſneſs and Integrity. In fine, they *at laſt* wiſh *themſelves* always in the *place* of the Righteous; and, however they have *lived*, yet *O that they could but* die *at leaſt the* death *of the righteous, and that their* laſt end *might be like his*; and thereby clearly acknowledge the Excellency of Virtue, its Neceſſity in order to the publick welfare of Mankind, and the Unchangeableneſs of its Obligation. By all theſe things, the wickedeſt of men do themſelves give Teſtimony to the Truth of this *1ſt* general Propoſition, *viz.* That there is originally in the very Nature of things, a neceſſary and eternal Difference between Good and Evil, Virtue and Vice; which the Reaſon of things does itſelf oblige men to have a conſtant Regard to.

II. *Secondly*; God has moreover, by his ſupreme and abſolute Authority, and by expreſs Declaration of his Will in Holy Scripture, by his poſitive Will and Command, eſtabliſhed and confirmed this original Difference of things, and will ſupport and maintain it by his immediate Power and Government in the World. The former Propoſition, *viz.* the natural and unchangeable Difference of Good and Evil, is contained in the *Suppoſition* in the Text, wherein this Diſtinction is *preſumed* to be equally evident with that of Light and Darkneſs. The latter Propoſition, *viz.* God's interpoſing moreover his ſupreme Power and Authority, to confirm and ſupport this ſame original Difference of things; is contained in the poſitive *declaration* in the Text, wherein a ſevere *Wo* is denounced againſt all ſuch as ſhall attempt to confound them. *Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs; that put bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter.* That ſuch is the Will of God, as well as the Nature of things; may in good meaſure be gathered even from what we *naturally* know concerning him. For God being the alone Author and Creator of all things; it is plain their Natures are reſpectively ſuch as he was pleaſed to make them; and their relations one to another are the reſult of that Conſtitution, which the Creator in his Wiſdom has thought fit to eſtabliſh; the *Nature* therefore of things is the *Law* of God; and whatever is agreeable or diſagreeable to right Reaſon, muſt be ſo likewiſe to the Will of the Author of Nature. Wherefore ſince Good and Evil, as has been already ſhown, are neceſſarily and eternally different in the Nature of things, as Light and Darkneſs are in the Frame of the World, and in the Judgment of our Senſes; it is manifeſtly the Will of God, that the one ſhould be the rule and determiner of our moral Actions, as the other is the guide and direction of our Natural ones. *The Light of the Body is the Eye*, as our Saviour himſelf expreſſes it, St. *Matt.* vi. 22; meaning to ſignify by an eaſy ſimilitude, that our Minds ought to be guided by Reaſon and Truth, as our Bodies are by the Sight of the Eyes. In this reſpect, the Light of Nature itſelf ſufficiently condemns

demns all the workers of Unrighteouſneſs; making it appear that the practice of Iniquity in every inſtance, is as truly and for the very ſame Reaſon a direct contempt of the Authority of God, as it is an abſurd confounding of the natural Reaſons and Proportions of things. The Order and Harmony of God's Creation, depends upon every Creature's acting according to the law of its Nature: And this Law of Nature to *Men*, is, our Obligation to govern ourſelves by that particular Underſtanding and Knowledge, whereby we are diſtinguiſhed from the inferiour part of the Creation; whereby we are enabled to diſcern between Good and Evil; and by which, as it is expreſſed in the book of *Job*, *God has taught us more than the beaſts of the field, and made us wiſer than the fowls of heaven.* God has indued us with Faculties, by which we are able to ſee and diſtinguiſh what will promote the Welfare and Happineſs of the World; and he has given us thoſe Faculties for that very End, that by diſtinguiſhing things rightly, we might direct our choice to ſuch Actions always as are moſt univerſally uſeful and beneficial to Mankind. God himſelf, in his government of the World, does always what in the whole is beſt; that is, what tends moſt to the Good of the whole Creation; and ſo far as *We* are capable of underſtanding his Attributes and manner of acting, ſo far it is manifeſt *we* are obliged to imitate *his* Nature; and in our ſeveral Stations to conform ourſelves to the likeneſs of ſo excellent an Example, by the ſtudy and practice of all Goodneſs and Holineſs, Righteouſneſs and Truth. This is the firſt ground and foundation of all Religion: This is that Knowledge of God and of his Will, which Nature implants, and Reaſon confirms, and all the Wiſdom in the World centers in, and all the Happineſs of rational Creatures depends upon.

But becauſe the vain Curioſity and ſceptical Diſcourſes, the vicious Inclinations and unreaſonable Paſſions, the evil Affections and perverſe Diſputings of Men of corrupt minds, have ſometimes as it were raiſed a duſt to obſcure this cleareſt of all *natural* Truths; Truth, concerning the neceſſary and eternal Difference of Good and Evil; even in like manner as certain ridiculous Philoſophers of old, undertook by ſubtil intricacies to confound the plaineſt Differences of natural and ſenſible things, to prove that Snow was black, or, as the Text expreſſes it, that Light is the ſame with Darkneſs, and Bitter with Sweet; therefore God in all the *ſupernatural Revelations* he has made of his Will, and moſt expreſsly in this laſt Revelation of the Goſpel, has placed the Sum of affairs in reſtoring Virtue and Goodneſs which is the Image of God, and in rooting out Vice in which conſiſts the Kingdom of the Devil; in aſcertaining the Difference of Good and Evil, and aſſigning to each of them their proper Reward. *Wo unto them*, ſaith he, *that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs*; Iſ. v. 20; *that rebel againſt the light*, Job xxiv. 13. *that love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil*; St. *John* iii. 19. This eternal Difference of Good and Evil, God has now confirmed with new Authority, illuſtrated with greater Light, diſtinguiſhed with plainer and clearer bounds, and inforced Mens Obſervation of this Rule with new Motives and ſtronger Obligations. For this he ſent his Son into the World, to be born, to live and to die for us; that he might effectually deſtroy the works of the Devil, and overthrow the Kingdom of Darkneſs: For this he has expreſsly revealed his Wrath from Heaven, againſt all Ungodlineſs and Unrighteouſneſs of Men; that the eternal Difference of Good and Evil, when Men had neglected to be moved by the Voice of Nature and Reaſon, might be ſupported by divine Authority and by God himſelf ſpeaking. To this all the Precepts of the Goſpel tend, and all our Saviour's Sermons terminate in it. To this all his mercies, all his patience leads; and all his judgments are intended to compel us. To this all his promiſes gently invite and draw us, and all his threatnings loudly command and preſs us. This is the End, to which all other things are directed as the means. This is finally good and profitable unto Men. On this depend all the Bleſſings of the preſent Life, and all the Happineſs of a future Eternity.

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III. I proceed in the *Third* and *laſt* place to draw ſome Obſervations from the whole, which may be of uſe to us in Practice. And

1ſt, From what has been ſaid we may obſerve, that Religion and Virtue are truly moſt agreeable to Nature, and that Vice and Wickedneſs are of all things the moſt contrary to it. It is naturally the part of underſtanding and reaſonable Beings, to obſerve the differences that are in the Natures of Things; and therefore if Good and Evil, be naturally and neceſſarily different; it is manifeſt it muſt needs be agreeable to Nature (unleſs ſtrangely corrupted with evil habits,)that Men ſhould live religiouſly by diſcerning and chuſing what is good and avoiding what is evil. Men do indeed frequently err in this matter, and are wilfully blinded by innumerable Corruptions, by cuſtoms and evil habits, by pleaſure and intereſts, by falſe opinions and looſe practices; and then, to excuſe and vindicate themſelves, they take refuge in the Follies of Infidelity, and preſumptuouſly call *Light Darkneſs and Darkneſs Light*; And as a Palate vitiated by a long diſeaſe, ceaſes to be able to diſtinguiſh between Sweet and Bitter; ſo theſe hardened Sinners mock at all difference of Good and Evil: But ſtill the natures of things remain unalterably what they were, and cannot but juſtify themſelves to the Reaſon and Underſtanding even of thoſe very Men that unreaſonably deny them. It is not Nature, (as they weakly and falſely reproach it,) but unnatural and corrupt Inclinations, that lead them to Wickedneſs. Nature and Reaſon, as well as Revelation, call upon Men to be religious; and Virtue and Goodneſs are as truly agreeable to the Mind, as Light is to the Eyes, or Sweetneſs to the Taſte. Their own Conſciences reproach them as often as they act otherwiſe; and no worldly Advantages whatſoever, no Power upon Earth, can ever diſcharge them from this Obligation. *Solomon* had greater Experience, and made more Obſervations upon theſe things, than any other man that ever lived; And the Sum of all *his* Obſervations, is the Reflection, *Eccleſ.* ii. 13; *Then I ſaw that Wiſdom excelleth Folly, as far as Light excelleth Darkneſs.*

2dly, From what has been ſaid, it follows, that the knowledge of the moſt important and fundamental Doctrines of Religion, muſt be very eaſy to be attained; and that groſs ignorance of our Duty, can by no means be innocent or excuſable; our Minds being as naturally fitted to underſtand the moſt neceſſary parts of it, as our Eyes are to judge of Colours, or our Palate of Taſtes. *If any man will do his Will, he ſhall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God.* To diſcover that we ought to Fear and Love, to worſhip and obey the great Creator of all things, the Author and Preſerver of our Beings, and the Giver of all things we enjoy or hope for: To underſtand that Juſtice is better than Iniquity, and Love and Charity than Violence and Oppreſſion; doing good to Mankind than conquering of Nations, and preſerving the World than ravaging and deſtroying it: To find out that Temperance and Sobriety, is more excellent than Debauchery; and wiſe and reaſonable Counſels, than the ſudden impulſes of Luſts and Paſſion: Theſe things require no great depth of Knowledge, no nice and tedious diſputes, nothing that can perplex or confound the underſtanding even of the meaneſt Perſon: They are eaſy and obvious, plain and ſelf-evident, and viſible as the cleareſt day-light: Yet theſe are the things of the greateſt importance, and which are of the higheſt concernment for all men to know and underſtand: Theſe are the things by which the World ſubſiſts; by which alone all Order and Government is maintained. Men that have Time and Abilities may lawfully and commendably and to very excellent purpoſes, ſtudy ſome things of greater difficulty. There is variety enough in the *Works* of God, to employ the whole capacity of Men and Angels to all eternity; There are depths and ſecrets in the diſpenſations of *Providence*; There are *ſome* difficulties in ſome circumſtances of the *Laws* of God, and in the Revelations of his Will; And theſe are a worthy employment for the moſt enlarged underſtandings upon Earth. But the things which are of abſolute and indiſpenſable neceſſity to the happineſs of men, theſe, under the Government of a Juſt

a Juſt and Wiſe and Good God, it cannot be imagined but they muſt be univerſally level to the Capacities of all Mankind. SERM. XXV.

3*dly*, From hence it appears, that the judgments of God upon impenitent Sinners, who obſtinately diſobey the moſt reaſonable and Neceſſary Laws in the World; are true and juſt and righteous judgments. Had God commanded us things only in their own nature indifferent; yet *even here* obedience to the Supreme Lord of all things, would have been highly reaſonable; and all Creatures could not but confeſs his Juſtice, if they were ſeverely puniſhed for Diſobedience to *ſuch* Commands. But when the Supreme Power and Authority of God, impoſes ſcarcely any thing upon us, but what the very nature of the things themſelves makes neceſſary, what the Conſciences of Sinners themſelves cannot but approve as moſt reaſonable and excellent, and what the Happineſs of Man immediately and directly conſiſts in, as well as the Law of God makes it his Duty to obſerve; how much more muſt Sinners now confeſs before all the World the righteouſneſs of God's judgments manifeſted in their deſtruction, if they will not by his Goodneſs be led to Repentance!

4*thly*, From hence we may conclude, that whatever Doctrine is contrary to the nature and attributes of God, whatever is plainly unwiſe or wicked, whatever tends to confound the eſſential and eternal differences of Good and Evil, every ſuch Doctrine, how plauſibly ſoever it may be ſupported, muſt neceſſarily be falſe. By this Rule the Heathens might have diſcovered the Folly of that Idolatry, which taught them to worſhip ſuch Gods, as they themſelves had firſt feigned like to the moſt wicked Men. And by the ſame Rule, Men of Underſtanding and Probity will eaſily condemn moſt of the corruptions both in Doctrine and Worſhip, which have in many places among Chriſtians themſelves crept in under a falſe pretence of divine Revelation. And at the ſame time, it is a credible and excellent evidence of the Truth of the pure and uncorrupted Doctrine of the Goſpel as delivered in Scripture; that, beſides the Authority of Miracles and Prophecies, it is inwardly in the Nature of the thing itſelf, a conformity to the divine Nature and Attributes, a confirmation and improvement of our natural Notions of Good and Evil, and of the Rewards and Puniſhments in a future State, and Aſſurance of the Reconciliation of God to repenting Sinners through the Mediation of Chriſt, and a direct Promoter of the univerſal Happineſs of Mankind.

Laſtly; From what has been ſaid it is certain, that every Perſon or Doctrine, which would ſeparate Religion from an holy Life; and make Religion to conſiſt merely in ſuch ſpeculative Opinions, as may be defended by an ill Liver; or in ſuch outward Solemnities of Worſhip, as may be performed by a vicious and wicked Man; does greatly corrupt Religion. The deſign and very eſſence of Religion, is to make Men good and happy: The deſign of the Revelation of the Goſpel, is to deſtroy Superſtition, and to reſtore the Truth of Religion, by correcting mens Opinions and reforming their Manners, by introducing Repentance, and ſecuring to us the Acceptableneſs of it through the merits of Chriſt. If without this, Men will pretend to be religious by any other method, they wholly miſtake the Nature of Religion, and the deſign of the Goſpel of Chriſt. If they will not add to their Faith Virtue, but think it ſufficient that they hold the Truth, though it be in Unrighteouſneſs; they are like the Man who, our Saviour tells us, *built his houſe upon the Sand*: Their very Faith itſelf will but increaſe their Guilt; and the Truth which they profeſs, will but the more ſeverely condemn them for being workers of Iniquity. *Which Condemnation that we may all eſcape, God of his infinite mercy grant*, &c.

SERMON XXVI.

Of the Nature of Moral and Poſitive Duties.

MATT. xxii. 40.

On theſe two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

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THESE Words are part of our Saviour's anſwer to a captious Queſtion propoſed to him by one of the Phariſees; Which *was the great Commandment in the Law?* It appears from the parallel place in St. *Mark*, ch. xii. ver. 33, that *the compariſon* was made between the eternal and unchangeable Duties of Piety and Righteouſneſs on the one hand, and the external Precepts of the Law of *Moſes*, *burnt offerings and ſacrifices*, on the other. For when our Saviour had given this Anſwer to the Queſtion propoſed; that the firſt and great Commandment of all, was this, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy ſtrength*; and that the ſecond was like unto it, *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thy ſelf*; and added, that *on theſe two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets*; that is, that theſe are the ultimate End and Deſign of Religion; and all poſitive Precepts, only ſubordinate to theſe, and as means to theſe great Ends; The Phariſee convinced with the *clearneſs*, and pleaſed with the *goodneſs* of the Anſwer, replies, ver. 32, 33

33; *Well, Maſter, thou haſt ſaid the Truth; for there is one God, and there is none other but he. And to love him with all the heart, and with all the underſtanding, and with all the ſoul, and with all the ſtrength; and to love his neighbour as himſelf,* is *more than all whole burnt-offerings and ſacrifices.* SERM. XXVI.

Our Saviour's Determination of the Queſtion propoſed to him, was plain and clear, full and deciſive; that there was no Compariſon at all, between the excellency of ritual and of moral Duties. The Love of God and of our Neighbour, are the Life and Eſſence of true Religion; the higheſt improvement and the greateſt poſſible Perfection of our rational Nature; The Sum and Fountain, *in* which all other moral Duties are contained, *from* which they all ſpring, and *to* which they may be all reduced; and they are the ultimate *End*, for the Security of which, all *poſitive* Commandments, were ever given at all. All the Precepts of the Law of *Moſes*, tend to this great End; All the Exhortations of the Prophets, are directed to the ſame Deſign; and nothing is truly valuable in the ſight of God, but what is derived from theſe Fountains, and terminates in theſe excellent Ends.

It may perhaps juſtly be wondred, *how* the *Jews* in our Saviour's time *could* poſſibly be ſo ignorant of the nature of true Religion, and ſo poſſeſſed with falſe Notions concerning it; as to make *any* Competition, between the value of mere External Forms, and the Real Practice of True Virtue; after God had ſo frequently declared to them by his Prophets, that their *Sacrifices and oblations, their waſhings and purifications, their feaſts and ſolemn aſſemblies, their faſts and ſevereſt humiliations, were ſo far from being acceptable in his ſight*, if not accompanied with the practice of Juſtice, *Truth, Righteouſneſs, and Charity*; that on the contrary, *without* theſe virtues, theſe very rites, though of his own Inſtitution, were the *greateſt abomination in his ſight*; as being only evidences, of a deeper hypocriſy. *To what purpoſe is the multitude of your Sacrifices unto me, ſaith the Lord? I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beaſts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs or of he-goats:* But *Waſh ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well, ſeek judgment, relieve the oppreſſed, judge the fatherleſs, plead for the widow*; Then *though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be white as ſnow; though they be red like crimſon, they ſhall be as wool.* Iſaiah i. 11.

But yet, notwithſtanding theſe plain and frequent declarations of the Prophets, it is evident in the whole Hiſtory of the Goſpel, that the moſt eminent and famous men, men of the greateſt character and eſteem for learning and piety among the Jews, Scribes and Phariſees, Doctors, and Expounders of the Law, were, in our Saviour's time, almoſt univerſally fallen under this great and fatal Miſtake. They were very ſtrict and zealous even to the higheſt degree of Superſtition, in obſerving the outward rites and ceremonies of the Law; concerning which, our Saviour, with great exactneſs of expreſſion, ſays, *that they ought not indeed to be left undone:* But at the ſame time *they neglected the practice of the great and weightier and more indiſpenſable Duties of Truth and Righteouſneſs and Goodneſs towards all men.* They were very ſtrict and ſuperſtitious in outward Purifications, in the *waſhings of pots and cups, and the like*; while they took no care at all to purify their own *Minds, from unrighteouſneſs and all uncleanneſs.* And if we duly conſider the corrupt eſtate of humane Nature; it may not perhaps be very difficult, to give an account *whence* all this Evil ariſes. For, to Men of corrupt affections and indulged vicious habits, nothing is ſo difficult as the practice of Virtue and true Religion; To mortify long-indulged Appetites, to cleanſe themſelves from all filthineſs both of Fleſh and Spirit, to conquer vicious Inclinations, to root out confirmed Habits, to govern unruly Paſſions; theſe things *are like cutting off a right hand, and pulling out a right eye*; or, as *Nicodemus* expreſſes it, *like a man's being born again when he is old.* And yet, in order to keep up a Reputation in the World, 'tis abſolutely neceſſary, that Men have *ſome* pretence of Zeal for Religion. Corrupt Minds therefore, who will not be at the Pains to practiſe true Virtue, and yet deſire to ſerve themſelves of the temporal Advantages which the Name and

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Credit of Religion is apt to gain in the World; *muſt* call ſome things elſe, *muſt* call certain Forms or Opinions, by the Name of Religion, inſtead of That which really and only is ſo. They *muſt* make Religion to conſiſt, in things *more viſible* to the Eyes of the Vulgar, and better fitted to procure the applauſe of the World; than the ſincereſt Love of God, and of our Neighbour; than Meekneſs and ſimplicity, Juſtice and Charity, Holineſs and Purity of Mind, and the Practice of other the like excellent Virtues; which are ſo much the more ſincere and of the greater value in the ſight of God, as they are ſeated in the heart and Soul itſelf, and are leſs expoſed to the Eye of the World. This *One* Miſtake, is the great and general Corruption of Mankind: This has at all Times and in all Places been the firſt and the Laſt Errour in matters of Religion. Thus did the *Phariſees* in our Saviour's Days: And Thus amongſt *Chriſtians*, in all places, eſpecially where Popery has prevailed, and in Other places in proportion as the ſame Spirit has gained ground, How has the worſhip of God been corrupted, and almoſt wholly turned into Pomp and Superſtition? How have the empty forms and appearances of Religion, ſhut out the true Love of God, which conſiſts in Imitation of his Nature and in Obedience to his Holy and Divine Commands? How hath falſe Zeal for vain and corrupt Doctrines, for the Doctrines and Traditions of particular *Men* or Sects and *Bodies of Men*, turned Chriſtian Love, Meekneſs and Charity, thoſe prime and fundamental Duties, into that which is the *moſt directly oppoſite* to the whole End and Deſign of *all* Religion, even into the greateſt and moſt inhumane Cruelties? How have vain penances, and repeated confeſſions and abſolutions, and other weak and deceitful obſervances, been ſubſtituted in the room of true Repentance and Reformation of Life? In a word, how numberleſs have been the inventions of Men, and what pains have they not been willing to take, to reconcile the *Name* of Religion with the *practice* of wickedneſs, and to make great Zeal for God conſiſtent with being workers of Iniquity? And how totally have been neglected thoſe Great and Eternal Duties, which are briefly ſummed up in the *Love of God and of our neighbour? on which two Commandments our Saviour* (in the Text) affirms, *that all the Law and the Prophets depend*: That is; All Chriſtian Duties are either *contained in* theſe; or are *ſubſervient to* them: All *moral* Duties may be reduced to theſe Heads, and are contained *under* them; and all *poſitive* Injunctions are only ſubſervient *to* them, and but as means to theſe Ends.

I. *Firſt*; All *moral* Duties are contained *in*, and may be reduced *to* theſe two Heads; the Love of God and of our Neighbour.

God, is a Being of infinite and unlimited Perfections; the Fountain of all Goodneſs and Happineſs; who contains in himſelf all things that are excellent, all things that are truly worthy of Admiration or Love; and from whom, as from their only Fountain, are derived all Excellencies, that are found in the *whole* or in any *parts* of the Creation. To *Love* God therefore, is to have always fixt upon our Minds a juſt regard to the Perfections of his Nature; and a due Senſe of his inеſtimable Goodneſs, in communicating ſo much Happineſs to his Creatures. And This, if carefully attended to, ſo as to produce its juſt Effect and natural Conſequence, muſt neceſſarily have ſuch an Influence upon our Practice, as to cauſe us to Praiſe and to Adore him continually, to devote our ſelves wholly to *his* Service, who is the only Author of our Being, and of whatever Good we enjoy or hope for; to worſhip him conſtantly, and him only, who alone has the Power of all things in his own Hands, and employs that Power under the Direction of infinite Goodneſs, only for the Benefit and Welfare of all his Creatures, according to their ſeveral Capacities. How inconſiſtent with this Love of God is it, to prefer ſinful and corrupt enjoyments, ſhort and tranſitory, and unrighteous Pleaſures, before that infinite and eternal Happineſs, which God has propoſed to us in the fruition of himſelf? and how will This naturally oblige us to govern our Paſſions, to moderate our Appetites, to reſtrain all unreaſonable Deſires, to deſpiſe all the Allurements of Sin, and (in a word) to apply our ſelves wholly to the Obſervation of his juſt and righte-

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ous Commands? Thus all the Duties of the firſt Table, which relate to God; and alſo all thoſe Duties which reſpect our ſelves, or the Government of our Paſſions and Appetites by the Rules of Reaſon and Religion; ſpring from the Love of God, as from their true Fountain; and are all neceſſarily contained in it, and may eaſily be reduced to it. SERM. XXVI.

In like manner; The Duties of the ſecond Table, are all as plainly contained *under*, and may be reduced *to*, the Love of our *Neighbour*; as the Duties of the firſt Table, are to the Love of *God*. God created and ſent us into this World on purpoſe, to do Good one to another; to love and to aſſiſt each other, in all the neceſſities and exigences of human Life. In this, all his Commandments terminate; for this, he propoſes to us the example of his own infinite Goodneſs; This End whoever conſtantly aims at, and ſteddily purſues, will never greatly fail in the particulars of his Duty. He that loves his neighbour ſincerely as himſelf; and is willing to do to all Men, as he deſires they ſhould do to him; that thinks himſelf ſent into the World on purpoſe to do Good to others, and looks upon it as the Sum and End of his Duty, to promote the univerſal peace and happineſs of Mankind; will certainly upon this Principle regularly and uniformly perform all the parts of his Duty towards Men; And this univerſal Love of his Neighbour, will as naturally ſpread itſelf into all the branches of a truly Chriſtian converſation in the World, as a root or ſtock will in a fit and proper ſoil, regularly ſend forth branches, leaves and fruit, agreeable to its proper nature and kind. From this Fountain of univerſal Love and Charity, will certainly flow all thoſe ſtreams of virtue and good works, in which conſiſts the Life and Beauty and Uſefulneſs, and the true Excellency and Glory of Religion. Whoever is under the guidance of this one Principle, will naturally behave himſelf well in all relations, and perform the part of a wiſe and good Man in all the different accidents and circumſtances of Life. Such a one, will not fail to make it his buſineſs, to promote the publick Good; and delight to contribute as much as poſſible towards the Peace and Welfare of the World. He will naturally treat his Superiours with chearful Submiſſion, his Benefactors with gratitude and all decent reſpect, his Equals with affability and readineſs to do all Offices of kindneſs, his Inferiours with Gentleneſs, Moderation, and Charity. Thus evidently, under the Love of our Neighbour, are contained all the Duties of the ſecond Table; and from it, as from their Root or Fountain, they all naturally and regularly flow. This is what the Apoſtle teaches; *Gal.* v. 14; *For, all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in This, Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thy ſelf.* And ſtill more expreſsly, *Rom.* xiii. 8; *Owe no man any thing but to Love one another, for he that loveth another, hath fulfilled the Law*: For every particular precept, ſuch as, *Thou ſhalt not commit adultery, Thou ſhalt not kill, Thou ſhalt not ſteal, Thou ſhalt not bear falſe witneſs, Thou ſhalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in This ſaying, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thy ſelf: Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the Law.* And our Saviour himſelf; St. *Matt.* vii. 12; *Therefore all things whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets*; or, as it is in the words of the Text, *on theſe commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets*; that is, in this are contained, in this do terminate, all the Commandments of God.

Having thus ſhown, which was the firſt thing I propoſed, that all *Moral* Duties of Life may be reduced to theſe two Heads, the Love of God and of our Neighbour; I proceed in the

II. *Second* place, to ſhow that all *Poſitive* and *ritual* Injunctions, though in their proper place they *ought not to be left undone*, (as our Saviour himſelf expreſſes it,) yet they are but ſubordinate to Theſe, and ſubſervient to them; And this may abundantly be made appear by the following conſiderations.

1ſt, That the *moral* Duties of Life, *the Love of God and of Our Neighbour*, are things in their *own Nature* good and excellent, of eternal and neceſſary Obligation; which receive not their power of obliging, merely from their being commanded; but their Obligation is eternal and abſolutely unchangeable, as

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is the Nature of the things themſelves. Our Obligation to Love God, ariſes from the Nature and Attributes of God himſelf; and therefore That Obligation can no more ceaſe or be altered, than the Divine Nature and Attributes can be ſubject to change. In like manner, our Obligation to Love and do right to our Neighbour, ariſes from the Nature of Man, and from our Relation one towards another; from that ſtate and condition, wherein God has created us; from the Exigences of Life, the Neceſſity of Societies, and the Equity, Reaſon, and Proportion of things. So long therefore as theſe things continue the ſame; ſo long this Obligation alſo muſt continue unalterable. Theſe Moral Duties therefore, are by neceſſity and in their own Nature good and excellent: They are indiſpenſably neceſſary, to preſerve the Order and Happineſs of the World; they are neceſſary to the improvement and perfection of our Minds; they are neceſſary to Qualify us and make us capable of that State of Glory, to which God has deſigned us hereafter; But all ritual and ceremonial Obſervances, have no intrinſick Goodneſs in the nature of the things themſelves; nor any Obligation, but what ariſes merely from their being poſitively and occaſionally enjoyned. Their Obligation therefore is of a changeable Nature, depending wholly on the good Pleaſure of him that commands them; and conſequently though it is our Duty to perform them *when* and *where* they are enjoyned, yet they can never be compared or come in Competition with Thoſe Duties, whoſe Obligation is neceſſary and eternal; and the Practice of which, has an intrinſick Goodneſs and unchangeable Excellency abſolutely, in the Nature of the things themſelves.

2*dly*, All Poſitive and ritual Injunctions whatſoever, can be but ſubordinate to the Practice of moral Virtues; becauſe theſe latter are the End for which the former are commanded, and the former can be conſidered only as Means to the latter. In the Perfection of Virtue and Goodneſs, conſiſts the Image of *God*; and in the ſame likewiſe is placed the Chief Happineſs of *Man*. In this therefore conſiſts our Chief Good, on this depends our final Happineſs, in this lies the Excellency and Perfection of our Nature. Conſequently this muſt of neceſſity be our ultimate End; this muſt be the principal Scope of all our Actions; and nothing elſe can be truly valuable or worthy of Eſteem, but only ſo far as it may be a means and aſſiſtance to attain this End. Ritual Obſervances in Religion, if they be ſuch as truly increaſe our Devotion towards God; if they enlarge our Charity and Good-will towards Men; if they be ſuch as are ſignificant and remind us of our Obligation to Purity and Temperance in ourſelves; they are then indeed of excellent Uſe, and (ſo far as they are commanded,) of indiſpenſable Obligation. *Baptiſm*, as St. *Peter* affirms, *does indeed ſave us*; 1 Pet. iii. 21; but it does ſo by being, not barely a waſhing away the filth of the fleſh, but the anſwer of a good Conſcience towards God. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper likewiſe confirms our Title to Eternal Life; but it does ſo by renewing our Obligation and our Vows, to obey that Covenant upon which eternal Life was promiſed us in Chriſt. Circumciſion in like manner, and the Purifications appointed under the Law, were means of Salvation to the *Jews*; yet not by any Virtue in the things themſelves, but as Inſtances of Obedience to the Will of God, and as repreſentations of their Obligation to Purity and Holineſs. Where theſe Obſervances are not uſed as Means to this End, they become altogether uſeleſs and unprofitable; *commandments which are not good, and precepts by which men ſhall not live*; as the Prophet expreſſes it. *Circumciſion, to them that obeyed not the* Law, *was accounted Uncircumciſion*; Baptiſm and the Lord's Supper, to them that obey not the *Goſpel* in the courſe of a virtuous life, are but as waſhing a dead Corps in hopes to infuſe Life into it, and an attempting to pleaſe God by profaning his Feaſt and deſpiſing his Ordinances. *The* End *of the Commandment*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *is* Charity, *out of a pure heart, and of a good conſcience, and of faith unfeigned*; 1 Tim. i. 5. In a word; *The Kingdom of God*, ſaith our Saviour, *is* within *you*; St. *Luke* xvii. 21: Every man's *Religion* is, not what he *profeſſes*, or what *ſhow* he makes in external Obſervances; but what *influence* it *really* has upon the *Man himſelf*, in the habit of his Mind, and in the courſe of his Actions, in his Family,

Family, in his Buſineſs, in his Dealings with all Mankind, in his common Converſation, and even in his very Diverſions themſelves, as well as in his more ſolemn Acts of Prayer and Devotion. For, in like manner, as in our Saviour's Parable, *not the eating with unwaſhen hands, or any thing elſe that cometh from* without, *can make a man morally* unclean; but only the wicked Diſpoſitions that are *within* the heart of the *man himſelf*: So on the contrary alſo, no rites or ceremonies, nor any thing elſe that is *without* the man, can make him truly *holy and religious*; but that *inward* habitual virtuous Diſpoſition of *mind*, the Fruits of which appearing in his Actions, determine the man's true Character and Denomination. Were this *One* Fundamental Truth ſufficiently attended to; Chriſtians could not be ſo abſurdly impoſed upon, as to make their Religion, whoſe *Eſſential* Character is univerſal Goodneſs and Charity, become on the contrary *itſelf* an Occaſion of Hatred, Quarrels, and Contentions. Which is by catching at the *Shadow*, to loſe the *Subſtance*; and by contending about the *Means*, to neglect the *End*.

3dly, The ſame thing appears further from hence that Moral Duties or the Practice of true Virtue, will continue for ever; but all poſitive Commandments are but of temporary Obligation. The Love of God and of our Neighbour, are Qualifications which will remain and be perfected in *Heaven*; but all ritual Obſervances, are appointed only for the aſſiſtance and improvement of our Religion here upon *Earth*. When that which is perfect is come, then theſe ſubordinate Inſtitutions are to be done away; And not theſe only, but even thoſe *Virtues* themſelves alſo, which are of a ſecondary rank, and whoſe excellency does not ultimately terminate in themſelves. Hope, and Faith itſelf, and all other Graces and Gifts of the Spirit, which are in order to theſe, muſt at the conſummation of things, neceſſarily and of courſe ceaſe: *Whether there be Prophecies, they ſhall fail; whether there be tongues, they ſhall ceaſe; whether there be knowledge, it ſhall vaniſh away: But Charity only, never faileth:* Our Love of *God*, will be as much *more* perfect in heaven than it is here; as our knowledge of him will then be increaſed, *when we ſhall ſee him as he is:* And our Love of our *Neighbour* will then be as much improved beyond what it can now arrive to, as the nature of Angels is at preſent more excellent than that of frail Men.

SERMON XXVII.

Of the Difficulty of arriving at Truth.

St. JOH. iv. 11.

The Woman ſaith unto him; Sir, Thou haſt nothing to draw with; and the Well is deep; From whence then haſt thou that living Water.

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THE former part of this Chapter contains a very remarkable Hiſtory of our Saviour's Converſation with a Woman of *Samaria*. The *accidental occaſion* whereof, as to Human appearance, was, his retiring out of *Judea*, to avoid the hatred of the *Phariſees*; leſt they ſhould apprehend and kill him before his appointed Time: But in reality, the *gracious Intention* of Providence in diſpoſing That ſeemingly accidental Occaſion, was, that the Goſpel might be preached to the *Samaritans* alſo, as well as to the *Jews*. And as, upon *other occaſions*, our Saviour uſually introduced his Doctrine under the veil of a Parable, that he might open it by degrees as Men were able and diſpoſed to apprehend it, and not ſurprize them with more Light at once than they were able to bear; ſo *here likewiſe* he took occaſion from things that ſeemed to offer themſelves in common Diſcourſe, to inſtruct firſt the Woman, and afterwards a whole City, in the great Doctrines of the Goſpel. For, in his paſſage out of *Judea* through the Country of *Samaria*, ſitting, as it were by chance, and being weary with his

his journey, on the ſide of a Well, (near the City of *Sichar*, called *Jacob's-well*, becauſe ſuppoſed to have been antiently digged by that Patriarch; he deſires a Woman, who came out of the City to draw Water, that ſhe would give him to drink, *ver.* 7. The Woman, perceiving *Jeſus* by his Speech and Garb to be a *Jew* and not a *Samaritan*; and knowing that the *Jews* and *Samaritans* were at ſuch irreconcileable Enmity againſt each other, upon account of their Differences in Religion, that they had no Communication nor Converſe one with another; ſhe ſeemed ſurprized with Wonder, and ſaid; *How is it, that Thou being a Jew, askeſt drink of Me, who am a Woman of Samaria?* ver. 9. *Jeſus* replied; *If thou kneweſt the gift of God, and who it is that ſaith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldſt have asked of Him, and he would have given thee living Water*, ver. 10. Meaning, by an eaſy ſimilitude taken from the Occaſion of their diſcourſing together, that he would have taught her the *Doctrine of Salvation* contained in the Goſpel; which is more truly refreſhing to a Mind well-diſpoſed and deſirous of Inſtruction, than Water to a dry and thirſty Body. The Woman not underſtanding the Metaphor, but imagining that *Jeſus* ſpake of real Water, anſwers in the words of the Text, *ver.* 11. *Sir, Thou haſt nothing to draw with, and the Well is deep; From whence then haſt thou That living Water? Jeſus*, opening and explaining the Figure to her by degrees, replies, *ver.* 13; *Whoſoever drinketh of* this *Water*, (the natural Water of the Well, to quench his bodily Thirſt,) *ſhall thirſt again; But whoſoever drinketh of the Water that I ſhall give him, ſhall never thirſt; but the Water that I ſhall give him*, (the Doctrine of eternal Salvation propoſed in the Goſpel,) *ſhall be in him a Well of Water ſpringing up into everlaſting Life.* And thus having prepared her by degrees, to remove her Prejudices; he then proceeds to tell her ſome of the moſt ſecret Actions of her Life, to convince her of his Power and Knowledge; and, after That, expreſsly owns himſelf to be the Meſſias; and then declares to *her*, and, upon the ſame opportunity, to the *whole City*, that not the *Samaritan*, but the *Jewiſh* worſhip, was, at that time preſent, the true Religion; but that both the one and the other were ſhortly to be ſuperſeded by the inſtitution of the *Chriſtian*, when *the true Worſhippers*, according to the Doctrine of the Goſpel, *ſhould worſhip the Father*, neither after the way of the *Jewiſh* Ceremonies, nor the *Samaritan*, but *in Spirit and in Truth.*

The Occaſion and Deſign of the *whole* Hiſtory being thus briefly explained; I return now to that *particular* portion of it, which is contained in the words of the Text: *The Woman ſaith unto him; Sir, thou haſt nothing to draw with; and the Well is deep; From whence then haſt thou that living Water?* The words were ſpoken by the Woman, (being yet ignorant of our Saviour's Intention,) they were ſpoken by *Her* in their *literal* Senſe. But our Saviour in his Anſwer, immediately applying them to a *figurative* ſignification; and calling his own *Doctrine*, the Doctrine of Truth and of eternal Life, by the Name of *living Water*; will juſtify *Us* likewiſe, in conſidering the words and diſcourſing upon them, according to that figurative Senſe or ſpiritual Interpretation, which our Saviour himſelf was pleaſed to put upon them. Allegorizing of Scripture, and putting figurative Senſes upon plain and literal Expreſſions, according to every man's particular Imagination or Conceit; is indeed a thing of dangerous Conſequence; and has in former Ages, been the occaſion of many vain Diſputes in the Church of God; whilſt Men of warm imaginations have, by ſuch a method of interpreting, found Doctrines in Scripture which never were there; and contended earneſtly for their own Fancies, inſtead of that Form of Sound Words which was once delivered unto the Saints: But, where our Saviour himſelf has made the Interpretation, and the Senſe is juſtified by the Deſign of the whole Diſcourſe; there we need not fear leſt we ſhould miſtake in our Explication, nor ſcruple to follow the guidance of ſuch an unerring Inſtructor. In diſcourſing therefore upon theſe words, *Sir, thou haſt nothing to draw with, and the Well is deep:* I ſhall propoſe the following Conſiderations. *1ſt*, Whence it comes to paſs, that *Truth*, (for that's what our Saviour in this Diſcourſe calls *living Water: Whence*, I ſay, it comes to paſs, that *Truth*) which ſeems ſo neceſſary

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ceſſary for *every man* to know, ſhould yet generally be ſo difficult for *any man* to come at: *The Well is deep, and we have nothing to draw with.* And 2*dly*, By what means *every* ſincere perſon, may yet certainly attain to ſuch a *Degree* of Knowledge, or the Diſcovery of *ſo much Truth*, as is neceſſary for his own particular Salvation.

I. *Firſt*; Whence it comes to paſs, that *Truth*, which ſeems ſo neceſſary for *every man* to know, ſhould yet generally be ſo difficult for *any man* to come at: *The Well is deep, and we have nothing to draw with.* It has been an antient complaint from the beginning of the World, among the Philoſophers of all Nations, who have profeſſed to employ themſelves in the Study of *Nature*; that *Truth* hath lain buried in ſo *deep a Pit*, that they have never been able to diſcover the Bottom of it. And the like Complaints we meet with, even in the *Scripture itſelf.* In the book of *Job: There* is, ſays he, *a vein for the ſilver, and a place for gold where they fine it; iron is taken out of the Earth, and braſs is molten out of the ſtone:* —— *But where ſhall* Wiſdom *be found, and where is the place of* Underſtanding? —— *There is a path, which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not ſeen; The lyon's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lyon paſſed by it: But whence cometh* Wiſdom, *and where is the place of* Underſtanding; *ſeeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept cloſe from the fowls of the air?* ch. xxviii. 1, &c. And *Solomon*, whoſe Largeneſs of Underſtanding exceeded all that went before him, and was never equalled by any that came after him, yet even *he* complained, *Eccleſ.* iii. 11; *No man can find out the work that God maketh, from the beginning to the end.* For, *as thou knoweſt not the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with Child; even ſo thou knoweſt not the works of God who maketh all*; ch. xi. 5; and ch. viii. 16; *When I applied mine heart,* (ſaith he) *to know wiſdom, and to ſee the buſineſs that is done upon the earth; Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the Sun; becauſe though a man labour to ſeek it out, yet ſhall he not find it; yea further, though a* wiſe *man think to know it, yet ſhall he not be able to find it.* But theſe things are ſpoken, of *natural* Knowledge; of the Knowledge of the Works of God in the Frame of Nature; which is that part of Truth, wherein we are leaſt concerned to be accurately inſtructed. In that which concerns us more, and ſeems to be of more importance for us to underſtand; the Works of God in the *moral* World, the Diſpenſations of his Providence towards the Righteous and the Wicked; even in *This* alſo there are Difficulties, which the Wiſeſt of men have very hardly been able to ſurmount. Atheiſtical and profane Spirits, have been willing to give it over, as irreconcileable with the Belief of a Divine Being; and Holy and Pious Men themſelves have been perplexed in their own Minds, when they could not find out the Explication. *My feet,* ſays the Pſalmiſt, *were almoſt gone; my treadings had well-nigh ſlipt*; when *I was grieved at the wicked*; and ſaw *the ungodly in ſuch Proſperity*; *I thought to underſtand this, but it was too hard for me*; Pſ. lxxiii. 2, 15. And the prophet *Jeremy*; ch. xii. ver. 1; *Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee; yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked proſper? wherefore are all they happy, that deal very treacherouſly?* And *Solomon* himſelf; *Eccleſ.* iv. 1; *I returned and conſidered all the oppreſſions that are done under the Sun; and behold, the tears of ſuch as were oppreſſed, and they had no comforter; and on the ſide of the oppreſſors there was power, but they had no comforter.* But this alſo is of leſs importance than that which follows. For even in that very thing, which of all others is of the higheſt concernment to us, the knowledge of our *Practical Duty itſelf*, the knowledge of what is incumbent upon *ourſelves in particular*, and of Neceſſity to be done by us; even in *This* likewiſe there may ſeem at firſt ſight, (to perſons not very conſiderate) to be no ſmall Confuſion; and to perſons not very conſiderate, the *Fountain of Truth* may appear very *deep*, and that *they have nothing to draw with.* For among that vaſt Variety of *Religions* that are profeſſed in the World, how ſhall a ſincere perſon of ordinary capacity find *Which* is alone the true one? and if he is ſatisfied that *Chriſtianity* is the true Religion,

Religion, yet among Christian Churches damning and anathematizing each other, and among Sects even of *Christians* fastening all Names of Contumely and Reproach upon each other, how shall he know *Which* it is his Duty to adhere to? The Church of *Rome* tells him, he must blindly follow *her* Authority; or else he forsakes his only Infallible Guide: All *Other* Sects of Christians tell him, he must follow the *Scripture* only, as the complete Rule of Faith and Manners; and yet in interpreting the meaning of that Rule, *They* also differ from each other; and Every one assures him he is not in the way of Truth, unless he stedfastly adheres to *Their* Interpretation. The Disputes about Religion are infinite, and yet it is of infinite importance not to be deceived: And *what shall* a sincere person *do to be saved?* This is the ground of Complaint; *The Well is deep*, and we *have nothing to draw with:* And now the Question is, (which was the 1*st* thing I proposed; whence comes it to pass, that *Truth*, which seems so necessary for *every man* to know, should yet generally be so difficult for *any man* to come at? And *first*, There is necessarily in the Nature of *Things themselves* some *Difficulty*, and in *our Understandings* much *natural Imperfection:* Which is a just and continual Ground of Humility, and Meekness of Spirit. *Some* things, are intirely above the reach of our Capacities; and *others* not to be attained to, without much labour and study. *Some* things, we can at most arrive but at a *probable* Knowledge of; and even *That*, not without such peculiar Advantages, as very few Men ever are Masters of. And in those things which are the most *level* to our Understandings, and which in their plain and *general* acceptation are of the greatest importance for us to know, there are yet *at the bottom* some accurate Niceties, some subtle Intricacies of Nature, which limit the *Degree* of our Knowledge, even in those very matters which we know the most; and set bounds to our Search even in those things, whose Nature we seem to apprehend the most thoroughly. In the clearest and most unbounded Prospect, there is a Distance beyond which no Eye can reach; and in the inmost Nature even of the plainest and most intelligible parts of all the Works of God, there is a depth into which no finite Sagacity can penetrate. But then these Secrets are no *part* of *that* Truth, which it is necessary for us to know; and therefore we have no just Reason to complain, that they are hid from our imperfect Understandings. There is *some* pains and industry, *some* labour and study, at least some *attention* and serious consideration requisite, to the understanding even of the most obvious and necessary Truths; And this is a just and reasonable Obligation upon every Man, according to the degree of his Capacity, to look about him and consider with due *Attention of Mind*, *which* is the true way to eternal Salvation; even in like manner as the Providence of God has wisely and reasonably made *some Labour* of the *Body* necessary, to the preservation and support of this *Temporal* Life. *With* such serious Attention, how mean soever a man's Capacity be, he shall certainly find out (as will presently be made appear more distinctly) *so much* of *Truth*, as is necessary for his own particular Salvation: But *without* Care and Attention, he must unavoidably continue *Ignorant* even of the most *necessary* Truths; because, in the very *Nature* of Man, our Understandings are necessarily slow and imperfect; and in the *Nature* of Things *themselves*, how plain soever in comparison, yet there is always *some* Degree of *Difficulty* to apprehend them thoroughly. And This is the *first* occasion of *Truth*'s being *difficult to be discovered.* But then, how great Care and Attention soever Men apply, and how large soever their Capacities be; yet if they amuse themselves in searching out things *above* their Faculties; or if, about things in the main sufficiently intelligible, they presume unnecessarily and where *Practice* is not concerned, to enter into such Intricacies and subtil Speculations, as are *beyond* their Depth; thus also they will run into Errour and Uncertainty. And This is a *second* occasion, why Truth becomes difficult to be discovered; namely, Mens *perplexing themselves*, by aiming at things *not necessary* to be known, that is, which relate not to Christian *Practice*; or at such *degrees* of Knowledge, as are not possible to be arrived at. Of This, those persons are a great instance, who while they have lost themselves

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in the Labyrinth of an imaginary *ſecret* Will of God, have neglected to obey, or perplexed the Obligations of obeying his *declared* Will and Commands. Which is juſt as if a Mariner in a cloudy Night, ſhould neglect his Compaſs, and reſolve to ſail by the Stars which cannot be ſeen. Of the ſame kind were the reaſonings of thoſe *Jewiſh* Doctors, who by their vain Traditions made void the Commandments of God, and taught for Doctrines the Opinions of Men. Under the ſame Denomination fall all thoſe Speculations concerning the *metaphyſical Nature* of the *Liberty* of Man's *Will*, and the like; which, while *Wiſe men* could not explain *wherein* their *Liberty* conſiſted, have made *Fooliſh men* doubt whether they had any *Liberty of acting* at all. The Church of *Rome* by pretending to explain *philoſophically* that which our Saviour ſpoke *morally*, concerning the *Bread and Wine in the Sacrament* being *his Body and Blood*; perplexed the Truth to ſuch a degree, that at laſt, after many Diſputes, they fixt upon That to be true, which of all other things was the moſt impoſſible to be ſo; and made all intelligent perſons in their Communion, of neceſſity to become Scepticks, and, ſo long as they continue in That Profeſſion, to look upon Truth not only as a thing difficult to come at, and hid as it were in a very deep Abyſs, but in reality not to be found any where at all. The Scholaſtick Writers in the middle and diſputing Ages of the Church, by preſuming to explain metaphyſically, how the *Son and Holy Spirit* of God, derived their Being from the Father; ran ſometimes even into Blaſphemy, againſt him from whom they Both proceeded; inſtead of taking care, by the Sanctification of the *Spirit*, and through the redemption of the *Son*, to reconcile themſelves to the *Father* and Supreme Lord of all things. *Laſtly*, To mention no more inſtances upon this Head; the Contentions which have diſturbed the World, about *Authority and Power* in making *Doctrines of Faith*, which yet none could ever agree in whom it ought to be placed; have frequently ſo far perplexed even thoſe who know and profeſs the plain *Doctrine of Chriſt*, which he himſelf has expreſsly declared neceſſary, *to be the only Rule*; that they have hardly truſted themſelves to act upon the Security, of ſo plain and evident and neceſſary a Truth. This therefore is the *ſecond* Occaſion of Truth's being difficult to diſcover; namely, Mens perplexing themſelves perpetually, by aiming at things needleſs and not neceſſary to be known. A *third* occaſion, is, *Prejudice and Prepoſſeſſion*; ariſing from the Cuſtom of *Education*, and from Mens depending on the *Opinion* and *Authority of particular perſons*, without Examination. For it is very natural, for men to be fond of ſuch Opinions, as they have been long accuſtomed to without contradiction; and which are maintained by ſuch perſons, for whom they have long been taught to have a great Veneration and Eſteem. Hence in Popiſh and other Countries, wherever any Errour has generally prevailed; however *contrary*, and however *apparently* contrary, both to Reaſon and Scripture the Errour be; yet the greater Number of Men, always ſteddily adhere to it; And it is very difficult, even for *reaſonable* and *conſiderate* perſons, ſo far to ſhake off theſe Prejudices, as to come to *inquire* and ſo much as *doubt* concerning an Errour, which, if they had not been ſo prejudiced beforehand, they would hardly have been perſwaded that any Man could ever be ſo abſurd as to have entertained at all. This is plainly the Caſe of *Tranſubſtantiation*, and of all other the like unreaſonable Doctrines. *Fourthly* and *laſtly*, The laſt reaſon of Truth's being difficult to diſcover, is the *Wickedneſs* and *Perverſeneſs* of Men; who, for their own Intereſt and Worldly Ends, do ſometimes on purpoſe endeavour to conceal it. Atheiſtical and profane men, have always made it their buſineſs to confound the World with Darkneſs and Sophiſtry; to caſt miſts before the eyes of the Simple, and Stumbling-blocks before the feet of the Unwary. And even among Chriſtians themſelves, there have in all Ages been *perverſe diſputings of men of corrupt minds, and deſtitute of the Truth, ſuppoſing that Gain is Godlineſs:* 1 Tim. vi. 5. There have never wanted Men, who for the ſupport of known Errours, and for temporal Advantages, have diſcouraged all Learning and ſober Inquiry after Truth, all ſtudy and diligent ſearch into the Grounds and Reaſons of things. Nay the whole Proteſtant World

World knows *who* have openly carried this matter ſo far, as to corrupt and falſify Hiſtories, to forge ſome Books, and deſtroy or ſuppreſs others, to take away, (as much as in them lay) the Key of Knowledge, and expreſsly to forbid the Reading even of the Scripture itſelf. SERM. XXVII.

Theſe are the ſeveral Ways, by which Errours are promoted and ſpread in the World, and from whence it comes to paſs (which was the *firſt* thing to be explained,) that *Truth*, which ſeems ſo neceſſary for *every Man* to know, ſhould yet generally be ſo difficult for *any Man* to arrive at. It remains that I proceed now in the

II. *Second* place to ſhow, by *what means* every ſerious and ſincere perſon may yet certainly attain to ſuch a *Degree* of Knowledge, or the Diſcovery of *ſo much Truth*, as is neceſſary for his own particular Salvation. This is the Inquiry, of the greateſt Importance in the World: And the Anſwer to it, may in good meaſure be gathered, from what has been before ſaid. For as Truth is contrary to Errour; ſo the Ways alſo by which they are propagated, are contrary to each other: And he that knows by what Means *Errour* prevails in the World, is by the ſame directed in general to the beſt Method of finding out the *Truth*. But to be more particular: Becauſe this is a Matter, that concerns Perſons of all Capacities; and Men of the loweſt Abilities are equally under Obligation to find out the Way of Life, as the Learneſt Diſputers in the World; from whence it is evident, that the Method of finding out ſo much Truth as is neceſſary for every particular Man's Salvation, cannot be a Matter of ſubtil Speculation, but of Integrity and ſincere Inquiry; I ſhall therefore propoſe what I think needful upon This Head, in three very plain and intelligible particulars. And

1*ſt*, He that ſincerely and ſeriouſly deſires to diſcover ſo much Truth as is neceſſary to his Salvation, muſt above all things take care, that he in the firſt place reſolve to *do* the Will of God; and then he has a promiſe, that he *ſhall know* of the Doctrine, whether it be of God. The greateſt impediment to the Diſcovery of Truth in matters of Religion, is a *vicious diſpoſition*; which makes Men hate to come forth into the Light, leſt their deeds ſhould be reproved. For, what St. *Paul* ſays of the *natural* Man, holds true of the *vicious* perſon much more; that he *receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are fooliſhneſs unto him, neither can he know them becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned.* If a Man deals ſincerely with himſelf, and ſuffers not himſelf to be blinded with the Love of any Wickedneſs, there is ſomething in the Frame of the Mind of Men, and ſomething in the Nature of Truth itſelf, which makes them agreeable and connatural to each other, as Objects are ſuited to their proper Organs; even as the Eye is fitted to diſtinguiſh Colours, or the Ear to judge of Sounds. Beſides which; ſuch a perſon is ſecured moreover by the Promiſe of God, that he ſhall by the guidance and Direction of the divine Spirit, be led into all neceſſary Truth: that the *Secret of the Lord* ſhall be *with them that fear him, and that he* will *ſhew* them *his Covenant.* Pſ. xxv. 14. Which is the Foundation of that excellent Advice of the Son of *Sirach*, Eccluſ. i. 26; *If thou deſire Wiſdom, keep the commandments, and the Lord ſhall give her unto thee; For the Fear of the Lord is Wiſdom and Inſtruction, and Faith and Meekneſs are his delight.* This is the *firſt* and principal Qualification, requiſite to the Diſcovery of Truth in matters of Religion. The *Second* is, that a Man firmly reſolve with himſelf, never to be deluded into the Perſwaſion of any thing, *contrary* to plain and evident *Reaſon*, which is the Truth of God's *Creation*; contrary to the known *Attributes* of *God*, which are the Truth of the *Divine Nature*; or contrary to the *moral and eternal Differences of Good and Evil*, which are the Truth and Foundation of all *Religion in general*, and are in *Scripture* conſtantly repreſented as ſuch. Had Men but kept ſteddily to this natural and plain Rule, this *Candle of the Lord* (as the Wiſe Man ſtiles it,) which God has implanted in their very Nature; Men, even of the meaneſt capacities, could never have been impoſed upon with the belief of *impoſſible* and abſurd Doctrines, ſuch as is *Tranſubſtantiation*; or with *contradictory* and unintelligible

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Explications of *true* Doctrines, ſuch as are moſt of the Schoolmens ſubtil and empty Speculations; Becauſe theſe are plainly contrary to the Truth of God's *Creation*, and conſequently cannot poſſibly be of Divine *Revelation*; for, *no Lie is of the Truth*; 1 Joh. ii. 21. Neither could they ever have been perſwaded to believe, that God *abſolutely and unconditionally*, without any regard to their Works, decreed from the Beginning the greateſt part of Mankind to *everlaſting Torments*; which is contrary to the *primary Attributes* of God, and to the *Truth* of the *Divine Nature*. Neither could it ever have entered into the Heart of Man to conceive, that *Cruelty and Inhumanity* ſhould have been *doing God good Service*; or that *Perſecution* ſhould have been ſet up in *his* Name and for *his* ſake, who came into the World *not to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave them*; who himſelf always *went about, doing good* only; and the very *End* and the *greateſt* of whoſe Commandments, is *Charity*; that is, Univerſal Love and Good-will towards Mankind. Nor could it ever have been imagined, that *Any Wickedneſs whatſoever*, ſhould have been made part of *Any Religion*; when all ſuch things are directly contrary to the moral and eternal Differences of *Good and Evil*; which are the very *Ground and Foundation* of *All Religion in general*, and as unchangeable as the Nature of God himſelf.

There are indeed in the *Old Teſtament* ſome inſtances of the Actions of great and good Men, which to weak perſons may ſeem contrary to this Rule; But it is for want of ſufficient Care and Attention, to the particular Circumſtances of the Hiſtory. *David*, the Man after God's own Heart, was indeed guilty of ſome Actions which are very far from being juſtifiable; But then thoſe Actions are expreſsly excepted, as being not *Parts*, but *Blots* in that Character. *Jacob* is repreſented as gaining the Bleſſing by an *Untruth*; But neither is that *Untruth* juſtified in the Hiſtory; neither was it in reality altogether an *Untruth*, becauſe he had before actually bought that Birth-right, to which was annexed the Bleſſing he then claimed; and at the buying the Birth-right, though that Circumſtance is not indeed mentioned in the Hiſtory of *Geneſis*, yet it appears from what the Apoſtle aſſures us, *Heb.* xii. 16; that it was not a *real* but a *pretended* neceſſity, and merely the *profaneneſs* of *Eſau*, that made him ſell and *deſpiſe* it. *Abraham*'s offering his Son, ſeems contrary at firſt ſight to the eternal Law of Nature; But he is juſtified by the *immediate* Command of God, who has undeniably a ſupreme Right over all: A *Right*, not to make Virtue to be Vice, and Vice Virtue; but a *Right* over the *Life* of every Man whom he has created: A *Right*, not to make it excuſable in *Abraham* to *hate* his Son; but to make it commendable in him to be willing to part with the Son of *his Love*. In receiving which Command, the Patriarch could not be deceived, becauſe he had been long accuſtomed to the *Manner* wherein God had been pleaſed to reveal himſelf to him; And he had moreover this peculiar ſecurity, that he was ſure his own Heart was perfectly right; in which caſe he might depend God would not permit him to be inevitably deceived; the Thing that was to be done, being no gratification of any Luſt or Cruelty, or any evil Inclination whatſoever, which is always the ſubject-matter of Temptations from the Evil One. The *Jews* at their coming out of *Egypt*, are repreſented as *borrowing* jewels of the *Egyptians*, without intention to *repay* them: And this is uſually excuſed by God's expreſsly commanding them ſo to do; who, without all queſtion, has a right to take from one and give to another, as he pleaſes: But (I think) the truer Anſwer is, that the Word in the Original does not ſignify to *borrow*, but to *demand*; and that, having now the Power in their hands, they refuſed to depart without being paid for that Work, which the *Egyptians* had hitherto unjuſtly compelled them to perform without Wages. But to draw to a Concluſion.

3*dly* and *laſtly*; The next, and the infallible means of finding the Truth in all matters relating to Religion, is, that to ſincere intention and virtuous practice, Men add *diligent Study of the Holy Scripture*, as the only authoritive Guide in matters of poſitive *Revelation*. Whoſoever he be, of how large, or of how mean capacity ſoever, that ſo ſtudies the Scripture, as to reſolve that he will *obey* all the

the plain *precepts* of Chriſt and his Apoſtles therein contained, and *believe* all the plain *Doctrines* he clearly underſtands, and *not be contentious or uncharitable* about thoſe he does *not* underſtand, but apply himſelf to ſuch perſons as he thinks moſt able to inform him better, not ſo as to depend implicitely upon *any Man's Authority upon Earth* in a matter of Faith, but ſo as by their aſſiſtance to enlighten and enlarge *his own* Underſtanding of the Scripture; This Man has found an infallible Guide, that will either certainly lead him in the way of Truth, or at leaſt ſecure him from all ſuch *pernicious* Errours, as might endanger his Salvation. This Man has diſcovered the *Fountain* of living Water; and has wherewith to draw, how *deep* ſoever it be. In a word: Notwithſtanding all the Darkneſs and Confuſion, all the Intricacy and Diſputes, which the Ignorance and Folly, the Perverſeneſs and Wickedneſs of Men, have introduced in the World; yet by this method, a ſincere perſon may certainly avoid all the *corrupt Doctrines*, brought in by thoſe who careleſsly follow *humane Guides*; and all the *needleſs Diviſions*, kept up among thoſe who pretend to follow only the *Word of God*: And as many as endeavour to walk according to This Rule, Peace will be on them, and Mercy, and upon the *Iſrael* of God.

SERMON XXVIII.

Of the Nature of Religious Faith.

JOHN xx. 29. *latter part.*

Bleſſed are They that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.

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THIS the Method of Scripture in *general*, and of our Lord in his Diſcourſes in *particular*, to take all Occaſions of ſetting before Men the Happineſs both of Virtue *abſolutely*, and of every degree of improvement in it *comparatively*. How much more valuable, *in general*, the *Love of Truth* and the *Practice of Virtue* is, than *any external* Circumſtances or Advantages whatſoever; our Saviour expreſſes in a very affectionate manner; when, upon occaſion of a certain woman crying out, *Bleſſed is the Womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou haſt ſucked*; he thus declares himſelf, *Luke* xi. 28; *Yea rather, bleſſed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.* How much *every degree* in *particular*, of improvement in virtuous Practice, either by more extenſive Habits of Goodneſs, or by overcoming greater or more numerous Temptations, or by doing what is right with fewer Helps and under greater Diſadvantages, does *comparatively* increaſe the Bleſſedneſs of being Righteous; is ſet forth to us diſtinctly in ſuch Paſſages of Scripture, as theſe which follow; *They that be wiſe, ſhall ſhine as the Brightneſs of the Firmament; and they that turn many to Righteouſneſs, as the Stars for ever and ever:* Dan. ii. 3; *There is one glory of the Sun, and another glory of the Moon, and*

and another glory of the Stars; for one Star differeth from another Star in glory: So also is the resurrection of the Dead: 1 Cor. xv. 41; *In a great House there are——Vessels of Gold and of Silver*, and *also of Wood and of Earth*: 2 Tim. ii. 20; *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely for my sake: Rejoyce, and be exceeding glad; for Great is your Reward in Heaven*; Matt. v. 11. And in the words of my Text: Where our Lord having overcome St. *Thomas*'s incredulity by a singular condescension in permitting him to feel and handle his Body after his Resurrection, and having thereby extorted from him a Confession of his being thoroughly convinced; reproves him afterwards, with this gentle Admonition; *Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed*; *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

The Words are plainly *comparative*, expressing the *greater Blessedness* of those who with *less Light* find the way of *Truth*, and with *fewer Helps and Assistances* do what is *Right*. Yet it is very evident, this is to be understood *only* of those, who in all *other respects* are in *like* Circumstances, and of whom are required the *like* Instances of Duty. For, not *All* who *have not seen and yet have believed*, have *in the Whole* the Advantage over Them who believed upon the Evidence of *Sight*; but *so far* only as their Circumstances are in all *other respects* equal, *so far* is the Blessedness greater of those who have believed *without seeing*. St. *Thomas* was one of those *Twelve*, to whom our Lord promised That high Preheminence, *Matt.* xix. 28; *When the Son of Man shall sit in the Throne of his glory ye also shall sit upon twelve Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Israel.* And *All* the Apostles, to whom this *singular* Promise of *Glory* was made; were of Those who, *because* they *had seen*, had *believed*: 1 John i. 1; *That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our Hands have handled of the Word of Life*; this *declare we unto you.* The Want of this *Evidence of Sense*, which the Apostles enjoyed; most certainly our Saviour in my Text did not mean to affirm, that it should give *every Believer* in the *latter* Ages of the World, a Title to a *greater* degree of Happiness in the life to come, than the *Apostles* themselves. But *so far forth*, as all *other* Circumstances are equal; *so far only* is it *more* advantagious, to have believed *without seeing*. The Apostles were intrusted with a High and excellent Office, endued with singular and extraordinary Talents, charged with a very great and laborious Duty, exposed to Dangers and Sufferings above all Men. Christians in the *latter* Ages of the World, may very possibly have *some particular* Grounds of Blessedness, which the Apostles had not: And yet it will not at all from thence follow, that they *are* therefore *in the whole* more Blessed than the Apostles. The Virtue of a *Man*, may in some *particular Respects*, or in some *single Points of View*, (as being in a State of greater ignorance, and more Temptations,) be *more* valuable than the Virtue of an *Angel*; and yet it will by no means from thence follow, that Men *are*, or that they *ought to be*, more Blessed than Angels. The Virtue of a *Penitent*, may in some *particular Respects* be *more* commendable than That of one who *never offended*; and yet it will by no means from thence follow, that Penitents *are*, or that they *ought* to be, more Blessed than those who need no Repentance. God intrusts all his Servants with what Talents he pleases, and places them in different Stations, and *deals to every man——Gifts differing according to* his own good pleasure. In the Church, he has given *some, Apostles*; Rom. xii. *and some, Prophets*; *and some, Evangelists*; *and some, Pastors and Teachers.* 3, 6. Of These, St. *Paul* affirms, that they are *Labourers together with God*; 1 Cor Eph. iv. 11. iii. 9: And of *All* Christians in general, that they *are God's Husbandry*, that they *are God's Building.* That in this Building, one *layeth the Foundation, and another buildeth thereon.* That in this Vineyard, one *planteth*, and another *watereth*: And that *every man shall receive his own Reward, according to his own Labour.* All, are not *Apostles*: All, have not the same *Gifts*: All, are not called to the same *Obligations*, or to the same *Possibilities.* As, in the natural Body, *all members have not the same Office*, Rom. xii. 4: So in the *spiritual* Body of Christ, God who *does what he pleases with his own*, appoints to every

ver. 10. ver. 6. ver. 8.

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every man his proper *Duty* or *Truſt*; *ver.* 3. The words in *Our* Tranſlation are here very *abſurdly* rendered; *God hath dealt to every man the meaſure of Faith*: But the Senſe of the Apoſtle is, *God has dealt to every man his proper* Truſt, a Truſt committed to his *Fidelity* or *Faithfulneſs*. What every man's *Truſt*, what every man's *Ability*, what every man's *Station* ſhall be; is the Appointment of *God*. But *in That* Station, *whatſoever* it be; ſo much the *more* acceptable ſhall his Fidelity be, as he has done his Duty under *greater Diſadvantages* or with *fewer Helps*. What our Lord declares in the Caſe of *Puniſhment*, that the Servant which knew his Maſter's Will, and did it not, ſhall be beaten with *Many* Stripes; is no leſs equitable in the Caſe of *Reward*; than he who, under *any* Circumſtances of *Diſadvantage*, does what is *good* and *right*; ſhall, (not indeed *abſolutely*,) but in *his Proportion* and *Station*, whatſoever it be, whether great or ſmall, be intitled to a *greater* degree of Recompence. *Bleſſed are they that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.*

Having thus explained *in general* the *Senſe* of the *Words*, and the *Ground* of the *Doctrine* contained in the Text; I ſhall now proceed more *diſtinctly and particularly* to the Obſervation of certain remarkable and important Truths, either *neceſſarily ſuppoſed in*, or *clearly deduced from*, this Aſſertion of our Lord. And

Firſt; What our Lord here aſſerts, clearly ſuppoſes, that in the Nature of things, (contrary to what *Enthuſiaſts* have frequently imagined,) *Faith* or *Belief* cannot but be *leſs ſtrong* in degree of Evidence, than either the *Teſtimony of Senſe*, or *Proof by Demonſtration*. Enthuſiaſts of all kinds have been very apt to imagine, that by magnifying the certainty and aſſurance of *Faith*, even *above* the Evidence of *Senſe* itſelf, and *equal* to that of *Demonſtration*; they could greatly promote the Glory of God, and the Honour of Religion: Not conſidering, that in reality on the contrary, by ſubverting the Nature of Things, they ſubverted the Foundation of That very Faith, which they fancied they were eſtabliſhing. For *Faith* or *Belief*, in the nature of the thing, neceſſarily ſuppoſes that there is ſome *Reaſon* for believing; Otherwiſe it is not *Faith*, but groundleſs *Deluſion*. And this *Ground* or *Reaſon* of Belief, whatſoever it be, cannot poſſibly but be always Somewhat, which we already *know* either by the uſe of our *Senſes*, or by *neceſſary and demonſtrative Certainty*. The Certainty of *Knowledge* therefore, of the things which we *know* by immediate *Intuition*, either of the *Eye* or of the *Mind*; muſt neceſſarily be *prior* to the Aſſurance of *Faith*, and conſequently *more ſtrong* in the degree of Evidence; as *every Foundation*, in any caſe whatſoever, *muſt* be *of Strength* to ſupport what ſhall be built upon it. The *Credibility* of things *not ſeen*, cannot but depend upon the *Certainty* of the things that *are ſeen*: And *Faith* or *Belief*, in its higheſt poſſible degree of *Aſſurance*, can eſſentially be nothing more, than a well-grounded expectation of things *Future*, in conſequence of what we ſee already *paſt*; or a rational Aſſent to the Reality of things *Abſent and Inviſible*, in conſequence of what we have ſeen or known to be *Preſent*. To endeavour to raiſe the Evidence of Faith *higher* than this, is entirely to deſtroy it. For, what St. *Paul* ſays concerning *Hope*, Rom. viii. 24; *Hope that is ſeen, is not Hope; for what a man ſeeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we ſee not, then do we with Patience wait for it*: may with equal reaſon be applied to *Faith*. In a man's aſſenting to what he *ſees*, or *knows*; there is nothing of *Faith*, but *Science* only. And therefore when our Saviour, in the words before my Text, ſays; *Becauſe thou haſt ſeen me, Thomas, thou haſt believed*: His Meaning was not, that *Thomas believed* what he *Saw*; but that by what he had *Seen*, he was convinced of the Truth of what he had not *ſeen*. The Scripture in *other* Places, always ſpeaks after the *ſame* manner; uniformly and conſiſtently throughout. When St. *Paul* ſays, *We walk by Faith, not by Sight*, 2 Cor. v. 7; his Meaning is not, (as ſome Enthuſiaſts have imagined,) that the Evidence of *Faith* is *ſtronger* than that of *Senſe*; but on the contrary, that the Grounds of *Faith*, though ſufficient

to

to command a reaſonable man's *Aſſent*, and to determine his *Practice*, yet are not equal to the Evidence of *Senſe*. And when he tells us, that *the things which are ſeen, are temporal; but the things which are not ſeen, are eternal*; 2 Cor. iv. 18; he plainly balances the *greater Importance* of the One, againſt the *ſenſible Certainty* of the Other. For now, ſaith he, *we know* only *in part*, 1 Cor. xiii. *and we propheſy in part---Now we ſee through a glaſs darkly*, [δι' ἐσόπτρου] 9, 12. through a *deſcrying-glaſs*, which makes ſome ſmall and imperfect Diſcovery of things at a great diſtance: But hereafter, when Faith ſhall terminate in Knowledge, *Then* we ſhall ſee *face to face*; as in a *looking-glaſs*, [κατοπτριζόμενοι, 2 Cor. iii. 18,] which repreſents things diſtinctly in their full and true Dimenſions. To ſpeak *otherwiſe* of Faith, and to repreſent it as of Evidence *Superiour* to Senſe or Reaſon; is to open the Door to all the Abſurdities of Tranſubſtantiation, and all other Extravagancies of the wildeſt Fancy; inſtead of cauſing Religion to *appear* to be, what it really *is*, the moſt *Reaſonable* as well as the moſt important thing in the World. For

Secondly; Though Faith *has not*; and indeed, in the nature of the thing, *cannot have* the Evidence either of Senſe or Demonſtration; yet our Saviour, in pronouncing thoſe men Bleſſed, who *have not ſeen, and yet have believed*; plainly ſuppoſes, and it is evident in itſelf, that many things are very *reaſonable to be believed*, and cannot without extreme Wilfulneſs and Unreaſonableneſs be rejected, which yet are neither *Objects of Senſe*, nor capable of *Demonſtration*. That many *inviſible* Things are real, is evident from the continual Effects of Nature, which are all of them produced by *inviſible Powers*; And from thence the *Being of God*, is ſtrictly *demonſtrable*. But they who have *not* capacities to apprehend the *Demonſtration*; have yet ſufficient *Reaſon*, from what they *are able* to obſerve and underſtand, to be *fully perſwaded* of the *Truth* of God's Being, and of his Government of the World. And every Atheiſt, who ridicules *This Faith*, does himſelf at the ſame time *believe*, with the moſt unreaſonable Credulity, things that can neither be *Seen* nor *Underſtood*. The *Judgment to come*, and the *future* permanent State of *Happineſs* or *Miſery*; are things not *capable* of the Evidence of *Senſe*, nor *demonſtrable* in any other way than that of moral Certainty. Yet the *rational evidence* ariſing from the conſideration of the *Perfections of God* and of the *Nature of Men*, confirmed moreover by the credible *Teſtimony* of Revelation; is ſuch, in which every reaſonable Man ought to reſt ſatisfied; 'Tis ſuch, as is abundantly ſufficient to juſtify every Man's Diſcretion, in parting at any time with any Temporal Advantage, for the Hopes of a Happy Immortality; 'Tis ſuch, as is really ſtronger, than what the wiſeſt and moſt cautious Men conſtantly go upon, in all the *Temporal* Affairs of Life. Hence the Apoſtle St. *Paul*, (Heb. xi. 1,) defines, *Faith* to be, what we render, *The Subſtance*; but the word in the Original ſignifies, *The well-grounded confidence* or *aſſured expectation*, of *things hoped for*; the *Evidence* or *rational perſwaſion* of the Truth of *things not Seen*. And argues, that though at preſent *we walk* indeed *by Faith* only, *and not by Sight*; 2 Cor. v. 7; yet we have ſufficient ground to be *always confident* (ver. 6.) of the Truth of God's Promiſes, ſo as to be able to ſupport our Spirits under all Events, and in every condition of Humane Life. The Apoſtles who *ſaw* our Lord's *Miracles*, and were *Themſelves* indued with *Miraculous Powers*; had indeed a *Superiour Evidence* of the Truth of Chriſt's Doctrine, than We at This Diſtance of Time can have; And therefore they were ſent forth upon a more *difficult* Duty. But to *Us* at This day, and to *all Chriſtians* at *all times* to the end of the World; the *Character* of the *Perſons* of the Apoſtles, and their *Sufferings* for their Teſtimony to the Truth of Facts within their own Knowledge, and the *Completion of Prophecies*, and the *Reaſonableneſs and Excellency* of the *Doctrine*, and the *Agreement* and uniform correſponding *Series* of *Hiſtorical* Facts; and the *State* of the *Patriarchal*, and of the *Jewiſh* and *Chriſtian* Church, from the Beginning of the World to this Day; does and will give *credibility* to the *Miracles* recorded in the Goſpels and in the Acts of

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the Apoſtles. And the abſolute *Demonſtrative Certainty* both of the *Grounds* and *Obligations* of *Natural* Religion, makes it extremely *reaſonable* and *commendable* in Men, to have a *Diſpoſition* to receive *That Confirmation and Improvement* of it by *Revelation*, which Chriſt and his Apoſtles ſo clearly taught, ſeparate from the *Follies* and *Corruptions* wherewith it has been confounded in latter Ages. *Bleſſed are they that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.*

Thirdly; This therefore is a *Third* Obſervation I would make upon theſe Words of our Saviour. Such Belief as I am now ſpeaking of; ſuch in its Nature, and ſuch in its Grounds, as I have now deſcribed; becauſe it is *reaſonable*, therefore it is *commendable*: And ſo much *the more ſo*, as there are at any time *more Temptations* ariſing, or *more Arguments* drawn, from *any* thing *except Reaſon*, in favour of *Unbelief*. A virtuous Diſpoſition of Mind, naturally loving Truth, and deſirous to do what is Right; apt to fear God, and to rely upon his Protection both preſent and future, as Father and Governour of the Univerſe; ſenſible of the neceſſary, the eſſential and unalterable Difference of Good and Evil, and moved perpetually with the Reaſonableneſs of the Expectation of a Judgment to come: The *more Temptations* it meets with to Infidelity, from ſuch Conſiderations as Theſe; that the things of another Life are remote in *Place*, and far diſtant in *Time*; that there is always a Poſſibility of being *miſtaken* in things which are not at all the Objects of Senſe; that there are often very great *Preſent Advantages* to be obtained, by tranſgreſſing the Rules which Religion preſcribes; and ſometimes very great *Diſadvantages* neceſſarily to be ſuffered, by adhering too ſtrictly to the Obligations of Morality: The *more Temptations*, I ſay, a virtuous Mind meets with, from *Such* Conſiderations as *Theſe*, to be ſhaken in its Faith concerning the great Truths of Religion; *the more* valuable and praiſe-worthy is its Stability in That Faith. Hence the Scripture ſo frequently declares, that *Bleſſed is the Man which endureth Temptation*; Jam. i. 12. Hence the Example of the *Patriarchs* Faith, is ſo highly recommended; in that they *ſaw the Promiſes* only *afar off*; Heb. xi. 13; and *having here no continuing City, but ſeeking one to come*, they *endured, as ſeeing Him who is Inviſible*; ch. xiii. 14; xi. 27. Hence St. *Peter* exhorts *Chriſtians* to *rejoice* in *manifold Temptations*; *that the Tryal of their Faith being much more precious than of Gold that periſhes, though it be tried with Fire, may be found unto Praiſe and Honour and Glory at the Appearing of Jeſus Chriſt: Whom* (ſays he) *having not Seen, ye love*; *in whom, though now ye ſee him not, yet believing ye rejoice with Joy unſpeakable, and full of Glory*; 1 Pet. i, 7.

Fourthly; The *Fourth* and *Laſt* Obſervation I ſhall make upon the Words of our Saviour in my Text, is; that though a Diſpoſition to receive and believe the Great Truths of Religion, however relating to things at preſent *inviſible* and *remote from Senſe*, is indeed highly commendable; yet to expect at any time, under pretence of Religion, to have things *contrary to Senſe or Reaſon*, entertained and believed; is greatly *abſurd* and *impious*. The Reaſon is, becauſe the *One* is founded in a *virtuous* and *good Temper* of *Mind*; the *Other* always proceeds either from deep and pitiable *Folly*, or from *tyrannical and unrighteous* Views. *The Simple believeth every word, but the prudent man looketh well to his going*; Prov. xiv. 15. Our Saviour does not ſay, *Bleſſed are the credulous*: But *Bleſſed are they that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.* Bleſſed are they who believe and willingly embrace things *reaſonable*, and act honeſtly according to That Belief, tho' the things themſelves be not at preſent viſible to mortal Eyes. To believe a *Judgment to come*, ſuch as the Goſpel of *Chriſt* has declared; is infinitely *reaſonable*, tho' we yet *See* it *not*. To believe *Tranſubſtantiation*, or any *Other* Abſurdity, contrary either to *Senſe* or *Reaſon*; is in the moſt profane manner to make Religion *ridiculous*, by taking away the very *Foundation* of *All Knowledge* and of *All Belief*, either in matters of Religion or in any thing elſe. For the Judgment of *Reaſon* being once ſet aſide, there remains no poſſible means of judging

judging whether any one thing whatſoever, be more *reaſonable* or more *unreaſonable* to be believed, than another; or whether, in Any caſe whatſoever, either Belief or Unbelief be in any degree *reaſonable* or *unreaſonable* at all. The Excellency of *Abraham*'s Faith, conſiſted in This, that *againſt Hope he believed in Hope*; Rom. iv. 18. But the *Ground* of this Faith, was; that his own *Senſes* aſſured him, of the reality of God's *Promiſe*; and his * *Reaſon* aſſured him, (ſo the Apoſtle expreſſes it, *Heb.* xi. 19,) that the thing promiſed was *poſſible in itſelf*, though beyond the Bounds of all *natural* Hope. Had the *Object* of his Faith been either *contrary* to *Senſe*, or *contradictory* in *Reaſon*; the Motives for his *not believing*, had been ſtronger than for his *believing*; and his *Faith* had been a *Credulity* founded upon *Nothing*. Whoever carefully conſiders this, will never imagine that the words of our Saviour in my Text, give Any Encouragement either to the Impoſitions of Popiſh Tyranny, or to the Extravagancies of Enthuſiaſtick Folly.

SERM. XXVIII.

* λογισάμενος

SERMON XXIX.

In what the Kingdom of GOD conſiſts.

ROM. xiv. 17.

For the Kingdom of God, is not meat and drink; but righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt.

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THE greateſt part of Chriſtians in the *Apoſtles* days, having been educated originally in the *Jewiſh* Religion, and but newly converted from it; it is not to be wondred at, that whilſt *Some* of them rightly underſtood the Nature and Excellency of the *Goſpel*, *Others* of them, who were of weaker Judgments and leſs clear Underſtandings, retained, for a long time after their Converſion, many of their antient *Prejudices* and *Scruples* of mind, concerning diſtinctions of *Days* and differences of *Meats*, which they had been taught to look upon, not (according to the true intention of the Law) as being *typically* and *figuratively* under the then preſent diſpenſation, but as being *really* and *intrinſically*, *morally* and *perpetually*, *clean* or *unclean*. Ver. 2. *One man* (ſays he) *believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs:—One man eſteemeth One day above another, Another eſteemeth every day alike.* The *Method* the Apoſtle takes in this Caſe, to prevent any Inconveniencies ariſing in the Church, from this diverſity of Mens apprehenſions concerning indifferent Things; is by perſwading them, that one of the Great Ends and Deſigns of true Religion, is

ver. 5.

is the promoting among Men univerſal peace and good-will towards each other; ver. 19; *Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another:* And that the only way to obtain this moſt deſirable peace, is to forbear cenſuring each other upon account of things not in their own nature vicious or immoral: Ver. 3; *Let not him that eateth, deſpiſe him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth:*—— *Let every man be fully perſwaded in his own mind: He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord, and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it: He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.* And ver. 13; *Let us not therefore judge one another——; but judge this rather, that no man put a ſtumbling-block or an occaſion to fall, in his brother's way: I know, and am perſwaded by the Lord Jeſus, that there is nothing unclean of itſelf; but to him that eſteemeth any thing to be unclean, to Him it is unclean.* And then he adds in the words of the Text, as an *argument* or *reaſon* for their thus bearing with each other, drawn from the *nature* and *eſſence* of true Religion; *The Kingdom of God* (ſays he) *is not meat and drink, but righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt.* SERM. XXIX.

In the following Diſcourſe upon which words, I ſhall 1*ſt* explain diſtinctly the ſeveral phraſes made uſe of in the Text: And *then* I ſhall proceed to draw ſome uſeful *Obſervations* and *Inferences* there-from.

I. *Firſt*; This phraſe, *The Kingdom of God*, in its *original*, *literal*, and *proper* ſenſe, ſignifies God's Supreme *Dominion* over the Univerſe; The whole courſe of *Nature*, in Heaven and in Earth, being merely the Effect of his Will and Pleaſure; for *All things Serve Him.* But becauſe the *principal* and moſt *valuable* part of Government, conſiſts in the Subjection and *willing* Obedience of *rational and moral* Agents; hence, in Scripture, *the Kingdom of God* generally ſignifies That *State* or *Eſtabliſhment of true Religion or Righteouſneſs* in the World, which *would* have been fixed and ſettled in the State of *Innocence*; but which, *by Sin and Diſobedience*, was removed from among Men; and which, by *Repentance* and *Amendment*, is again in ſome degree *reſtored* upon *Earth*; and will be *perfectly* and *for ever* eſtabliſhed in *Heaven.* And becauſe the principal *Means*, by which This recovery of ſinful Creatures is accompliſhed, is the *Goſpel of Chriſt*; therefore the *State of the* Goſpel, the Spreading of the *Profeſſion of true Religion*, and, above all, the *real efficacy and influence of it upon the Hearts and Lives of Men*, is by our Saviour and his Apoſtles frequently ſtiled *The Kingdom of God.* Thus when our Saviour firſt began to preach Repentance, *The Kingdom of Heaven* (ſays he) *is at hand*: And when he confirmed his Doctrine with miraculous works, *then the Kingdom of God* (ſays he) *is come unto you.* When the *Phariſees*, ſollicitous, not for the promoting of *Virtue* and *true Righteouſneſs*, but for the obtaining of *temporal power and grandeur, demanded of him when the Kingdom of God ſhould come*; his Anſwer was, *It cometh not with obſervation; neither ſhall they ſay, lo here, or lo there; for, behold, the Kingdom of God is* within *you*: And in like manner the *Kingdom of* Satan, is not an *external* ſenſible Dominion, but the power of *Wickedneſs* and *Immorality* reigning in the *Hearts* and *Lives* of Men. When our Lord bids his Diſciples to *ſeek* in the *firſt* place *the Kingdom of God*, he explains his meaning by adding in the next words, *and* His righteouſneſs: And tells them, that *whoſoever ſhall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child*, (whoſoever ſhall not receive the doctrine of the Goſpel with Humility and Sincerity, with Simplicity and Probity of Mind,) *he ſhall not enter therein*; that is, he ſhall not be acknowledged as a Diſciple of Chriſt at all. And they who *do receive* it for a *time*, but *continue not* to live worthy of the Religion they profeſs; this *Kingdom of God* (he threatens) *ſhall be taken from them, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.* And if it be not *taken from* them, yet, at the End, *the Son of man*, (ſays he) *ſhall ſend forth his Angels, and they ſhall gather out of his Kingdom* (out from among the Profeſſors of *His* Religion) *All that offend, and them which do iniquity*;

Mat. iv. 17. xii. 28. Luk. xvii. 21. Mat. vi. 33. Mar. x. 15. Mat. xxi. 43. xiii. 41.

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iniquity; *and ſhall caſt them into a furnace of fire*; *there ſhall be wailing and gnaſhing of Teeth.*

Now according to the analogy of *this figure* of ſpeaking, ſo often uſed by our Saviour, wherein he ſtiles the Eſtabliſhment of his true Religion the *Kingdom of God*; the Apoſtle St. *Paul* in like manner in *His* epiſtle, *The Kingdom of God*, ſays he, (1 *Cor.* iv. 20,) *is not in word, but in power*: His meaning is; The Religion of Chriſt, does not conſiſt in mere Outward Profeſſions and in Forms of Godlineſs, but in the efficacy of a true Perſwaſion upon the Minds of Men, bringing forth real Virtue and Holineſs in their Lives. And in the words of the Text, *The Kingdom of God* (ſays he) that is, the eſſence of True Chriſtian Religion, *is not meat and drink*; *but righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt.*

The phraſe, *Meat and Drink*, is an alluſion to that diſtinction of Meats, of clean and unclean, and other ſuch like external Obſervations, on which the *Jews* laid ſo great a Streſs in *Their* Religion. *Heb.* ix. 10; *The firſt tabernacle*,— ſays the Apoſtle, *ſtood only in Meats and Drinks, and divers Waſhings, and carnal Ordinances, impoſed on them until the time of reformation.* And becauſe they were impoſed *only until* the time of reformation, therefore, when the Goſpel of Chriſt was eſtabliſhed, theſe things were no longer to take place. *Col.* ii. 16; *Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in reſpect of an holiday, or of the new moon or of the ſabbath-days*; *Which are a ſhadow of things to come, but the Body is of Chriſt*:— *Why then are ye ſubject to ordinances*, —(*which all are to periſh with the uſing*,) *after the commandments and doctrines of men?* Things of *this* nature, even during the *Jewiſh* diſpenſation, were by all reaſonable perſons underſtood to be *in their own* nature indifferent, however *commanded* for a time upon *particular* reaſons. *Matt.* xv. 17; *Do not ye yet underſtand*, ſaith our Saviour, *that whatſoever entereth in at the mouth, goeth into the belly, and is caſt out into the draught? But thoſe things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and they defile the man*: *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, theſts, falſe witneſs, blaſphemies: Theſe are the things which defile a man*; *but to eat with unwaſhen hands defileth not a man.* St. *Paul* in like manner; 1 *Cor.* vi. 13; *Meats* (ſays he) *for the belly, and the belly for Meats*; *but God ſhall deſtroy both It and Them.* And again, ch. viii. ver. 8; *Meat* (ſays he) *commendeth us not to God*; (The Argument is *univerſal*, and held good at *all times* and under *all diſpenſations*, with regard to the *real* and *intrinſick nature* of things: *Meat commendeth us not to God*;) *for neither, if we eat, are we the better*; *neither, if we eat not, are we the worſe.* Even therefore, under the *Jewiſh* diſpenſation *itſelf*, things of *this* nature, though very ſtrictly commanded, in order to the more compleat ſeparation and legal Holineſs of that particular People; yet were not really *perfective of them that did the ſervice, as pertaining to the conſcience*; any otherwiſe than as *types*, having their ſignification verified by *moral* Purity and Holineſs. *Heb.* xiii. 9; *It is a good thing that the heart be eſtabliſhed with grace, not with meats, which have not profited* them that have been occupied therein. And if, even to the *Jews themſelves*, the caſe was Thus; *much more* were thoſe *Chriſtians* to blame, whom St. *Paul* writes to in this Epiſtle to the *Romans*, and in his firſt to the *Corinthians*; who, profeſſing a Religion not appointed for the ſeparating of *one* particular nation, but in which *all* nations were to agree, yet deſired to lay too great *a ſtreſs* upon ſuch particular Obſervances with regard to things in their own nature indifferent, as could have no other tendency than to promote Diviſions among Chriſtians, and uncharitableneſs in their *judging one another*; Which are the great Hindrances of That Glory of God, which conſiſts in the univerſal eſtabliſhment of true Virtue and Righteouſneſs amongſt Men. Againſt *theſe perſons* therefore he directs himſelf, when he ſo earneſtly exhorts, 1 *Cor.* ix. 31; *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* And ch. iv. 20; *The Kingdom of God is not in* word, *but in* power; not in mere *forms* of Godlineſs, but in the *effectual practice* of true Virtue. And in the words of

Rom. xiv. 3.

of the Text; The *Kingdom of God, is not meat and drink; but righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt.* SERM. XXIX.

The terms, *Righteouſneſs, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt*, are here put by way of *eminence*, as Parts for the Whole; as being the *principal* Virtues in which true Religion conſiſts, or (as our Saviour ſpeaks) *the weightier matters of the Law.* The *Reaſon why* the Apoſtle, in reckoning up theſe weightier matters of the Law, does not here mention, That *firſt and great Commandment*, the *Love* or *Worſhip of God*; is becauſe *That* is included in the *Subject* of his Propoſition, *The Kingdom of* God. The *Kingdom of God*, that is, the Religion of the ſincere Worſhippers of the True God, conſiſts principally and eſſentially, not in the Obſervation of mere external Forms, but in the practice of real and true Virtue, of *Righteouſneſs, Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt.* The Word, *Righteouſneſs*, comprehends the practice of thoſe *Moral* and *eternal* Virtues, *Juſtice, Equity, Truth, Fidelity, Holineſs, Purity*, and the like; the Oppoſites whereof, are *all Injuſtice*, and *Iniquity* towards *Others*, and *all Debaucheries* which Men practiſe among *themſelves.* The term, *Peace*, ſignifies That good Temper, That Charitable Spirit, and kind diſpoſition of mind, by which Thoſe who, with regard to *Things in their own nature indifferent*, have *not* exactly the ſame Sentiments, yet through mutual forbearance and love towards each other, preſerve nevertheleſs the Bands of Chriſtian Unity and Concord: For, Peace and Concord among Men there can poſſibly be, only by one or other of the three following Ways: Either by the agreement of All, in a perfect and infallible Knowledge of the Truth: Or by a compulſive and hypocritical Agreement, in the maintaining of Opinions which they underſtand not: Or laſtly, by an agreement of mutual Charity and Good-will, among All, who live in the ſincere Enquiry after Truth, and practice of Righteouſneſs. The firſt of Theſe, is the Unity which is among Angels: The Second is That Unity, which is among Profane, Atheiſtical, Irreligious, or very ſuperſtitious Men: The Third, is the *Peace* mentioned in the Text; the Peace and Unity which is among Good and Sincere Chriſtians; *walking in Love*, as the ſame Apoſtle elſewhere expreſſes it; and *giving no Offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God*; *Even as I* (ſays he) *pleaſe all men in all things, not ſeeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be ſaved. Laſtly*; The Phraſe, *Joy in the Holy Ghoſt*, ſignifies That *delight* and *taking pleaſure* in *doing good*, which is the higheſt *perfection* of *Chriſtian virtue*; and That *ſatisfaction* even in *ſuffering* at any time (if the Will of God be ſo) for Righteouſneſs ſake, which is the higheſt *Evidence* of *Chriſtian Sincerity.* Which affection of mind, becauſe it is (at leaſt in remarkable Caſes) worked in men by the Aſſiſtance and Influence of the divine Spirit, it is therefore called in Scripture *Joy of the Holy Ghoſt*; 1 Th. i. 6; and in the Text, *Joy* in *the Holy Ghoſt*; while at the ſame time, in other places, it is mentioned under the more large and unlimited Expreſſions, of *rejoicing evermore, rejoicing in hope, rejoicing in the Lord*; and, in general, doing all things (*Acts* ii. 46) *with gladneſs and ſingleneſs of heart.* Nor is there Any inconſiſtency in thus repreſenting one and the ſame Chriſtian Virtue, as being both a good diſpoſition of the *mind itſelf* in the *man* who poſſeſſes it, and yet alſo at the ſame Time an influence of the *ſpirit* of *God.* For as, in true Philoſophy, all *natural* Actions, when purſued, with the moſt ſagacious exactneſs of Inquiry, through all their ſeries of Second Cauſes, appear *at laſt* to the Eye of the moſt exquiſite Philoſopher, as they do *at firſt* to the pious Judgment of the meaneſt Chriſtian, to derive originally from God: So in *ſpiritual* Actions, thoſe very Virtues, which, eſſentially to their being Virtues at all, muſt be the voluntary Operations of a Man's own Mind, may yet, very conſiſtently, have at the ſame Time the *like* Sort of dependence upon the Influences of the divine Spirit, as all our *natural* Actions have upon that Concurrence of God, from which our Wills themſelves,

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and all the Faculties of our Nature, continually and every Moment derive their Power of Acting. And This Observation will very clearly account for all those Passages of Scripture, wherein the *Virtues* of *Men*, and the *Gifts* of the Spirit of *God*, are promiscuously taken for each other. The *Fruits* or Graces *of the Spirit*, in St. *Paul*'s Catalogue, are individually the same as *moral Virtues*: And *Barnabas*'s being a *good man*, and *full of the Holy Ghost*, are joined together as Expressions of the *same* Import: And what our Saviour in St. *Luke*, ch. xi. 13, says of our *heavenly Father giving his* Holy Spirit, is, in St *Matthew* recording the very same words, understood of *his giving* good things *to them that ask him.*

ch. vii. 11.

II. *Secondly*; And thus having distinctly and at large explained all the *several* Expressions in the Text, *The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*; The *Observations* I would draw from the Apostle's assertion in the *whole*, are briefly as follows.

First; That the Great and Principal End of true Religion, is the promoting and establishing among Men, the Practice of *moral* Goodness and Righteousness. *God*, is himself essentially a Being of infinite Purity and Holiness; and his *future Kingdom in Heaven*, is of such a Nature, that *there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.* Consequently those Virtues which are essentially necessary to the Enjoyment of the Happiness of Heaven *hereafter*, cannot but be the principal Constituents of the Kingdom of God *here*. Which Virtues, *our Saviour* therefore emphatically calls *The* weightier *matters of the Law.* And the *Apostle* accordingly, whenever he mentions *These* things, always supposes all *other* matters, to be, *comparatively* speaking, as nothing. *In Christ Jesus*, (says he) *neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.* For *Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the Commandments of God. And as many as walk according to This Rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.* For *These Things* (says he) *are good,* (are essentially good) *and profitable unto Men*: And *He that in These things serveth Christ, is acceptable unto God, and approved of* (all reasonable) *men.*

Rev. xxi. 27.
Mat. xxiii. 23.
Gal. v. 6.
1 Cor. vii. 19.
Gal. vi. 17.
Tit. iii. 8.
Rom. xiv. 18.

Secondly; The *Second* Observation I would draw from the Apostle's Doctrine in the Text, is: that though the Great and Principal End of true Religion, is the promoting and establishing the Practice of *Moral Virtue and Righteousness*; yet the *Externals also* of Religion, Matters of Order and Decency, and Particular Appointment, are nevertheless of Necessity not to be neglected. The distinctions of *meats and drinks* alluded to in the Text, though they are *not* the *Kingdom of God*, *not* of the essence *of Religion*, yet, under the *Jewish* Dispensation, they *were* expressly and immediately of *divine appointment*; And *so long as* they were appointed, and *for the* Ends *to which* they were appointed, and *in subordination to* those Ends, they *were* of necessity to be *observed.* The weightier matters of the Law, *ought*, (as our Saviour expresses it with the most perfect accuracy; they *ought*) to be *done*; and the others, *not to be left undone.* And, *in proportion*; now, and at all Times, under the *Christian* dispensation likewise, matters of *positive appointment*, of decency and external Form, though *not* of the *essence* of Religion, yet so far as they are *Helps* and *Means* of Religion, ought not in any wise to be *left undone.* In proportion (I say) This holds true, under the *Gospel* likewise: For

Mat. xxiii. 23.

Thirdly; The *Third* and *Last* Observation I would draw from the words of the Text, is; that *That* Form and Institution of Religion is *proportionably* the *most perfect*, which has the *fewest* positive external Rites, and lays the *least Stress* upon them; and wherein those Rites which *are* appointed, have the most direct and immediate tendency to promote *real* Virtue and Holiness. This is evident in the *nature* of *things.* For, in *all* Cases whatsoever, the *End* is *always* best and most certainly attained, where the Means made use of

are

are *Feweſt* in *number*, and moſt *direct* in their *Nature*, and moſt *obvious* in their *tendency*, and *leaſt apt* to be *perverted*, and have *no* other *ſtreſs* laid on them, than juſt as they promote the End they were deſigned for. The *End* therefore, is always principally to be had in View; and *Means* are nothing, but with Relation to the *End*. *The Kingdom of God, is not meat and drink; but righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt.*

The *Inferences* from what has been ſaid, ſhall be very ſhort, and ſuch as obviouſly follow from the foregoing Obſervations.

1*ſt*, From hence appears the peculiar Excellency and Advantage of the *Chriſtian* Religion; that it is not burdened, as the *Jewiſh* was, with a multitude of outward Rites and Ceremonies; with perpetual Waſhings, Purifications, Sacrifices, and other typical Obſervations, which (as the Apoſtle expreſſes it) *neither we nor our Fathers were able to bear*; but requires of us, in Order to eternal Salvation, only *Faith* in *God* and in *Jeſus Chriſt*, *Repentance* from *dead Works*, and *Obedience* to the *Laws* of Chriſt in the *Goſpel*, in expectation of the *Reſurrection* to *eternal Judgment*.

2*dly*, From what has been ſaid, appears the Great *Wiſdom* and *Uſefulneſs* of thoſe *few* even external Rites in the *Chriſtian* Inſtitution; the *Preaching of the Word*, and the *Adminiſtration* of the *two Sacraments*; Theſe being ſuch *Means*, as have a *direct*, *natural*, and *immediate* Tendency, to promote the *Ends* of *real* Virtue and Holineſs. For, by the *Preaching* of the *Word*, Men are inſtructed in the *Knowledge of* their Duty, and continually exhorted to perform it. By *Baptiſm*, they are admitted into a ſolemn *Obligation* to *obey* it: And by the Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*, they continually *renew* and *confirm* That Obligation. Nevertheleſs, *excellent* as theſe *Means* are, both in their *natural* aptneſs to the End deſigned, and moreover as being *expreſsly* and *poſitively commanded* by *Chriſt himſelf*; yet that they are ſtill *but* Means, ſubordinate *to*, and uſeful *only as* they promote, the Practice of real Godlineſs, Righteouſneſs, and Charity; is evident from hence; that the *Virtues* which theſe Inſtitutions were intended to promote, are *abſolutely*, *eſſentially*, *indiſpenſably*, and without *Any* excepted Caſes whatſoever, neceſſary to Salvation; there being no Expedient, by which an unrighteous Perſon, continuing ſuch, can *poſſibly* enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: The *Goſpel itſelf* to ſuch a Perſon, inſtead of being a *Savour of Life unto Life*, becomes on the contrary the *Savour of Death unto Death: Baptiſm*, being merely the *waſhing away the filth of the fleſh*, and not the *anſwer of a good conſcience towards God*, is of no benefit to him; and the receiving the *Lord's Supper*, does but increaſe his condemnation. But now on the other ſide, in matters of *poſitive Inſtitution*, though by our Lord himſelf, declared *generally* neceſſary to Salvation, yet in *particular* circumſtances there are manifeſtly *Some* excepted Caſes. *Infants* dying ſuddenly *before Baptiſm*, no reaſonable Perſon can believe ſhall periſh, for what can in no Senſe be eſteemed their own Fault. The *Penitent* upon the *Croſs*, though he could not be baptized, yet received from our Lord's own Mouth a Promiſe of Salvation. And in the primitive Ages, when Many Converts, before they could be baptized, were carried immediately to *Martyrdom*; no one doubted, but their dying *literally* with and for Chriſt, was more than equivalent to being *figuratively* buried with him by Baptiſm into Death. Which clearly ſhows the *true difference*, between the things which abſolutely *muſt be done*, and the Things which *ought not to be left undone*.

3*dly* From what has been ſaid, it appears, how contrary to the Spirit of Chriſtianity the manner of the Church of *Rome* is, in multiplying mere Forms and Ceremonies without Number, and particularly in making additional *Sacraments* of their own Invention, or pretended Means of conveying Grace, in order to amuſe the People, and withdraw their attention from the Practice of real and true Virtue. Thus *Confirmation*, which is only Mens publickly ratifying their baptiſmal Vow; and *Ordination*, which is the ſolemn Appointment of particular Perſons to a particular Office; are, with *Them Sacraments*. Alſo, inſtead of True Repentance and Amendment of Life, they have the

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Sacrament of *Penance*. And upon a groſs Miſinterpretation of a ſingle paſſage in St. *James's* epiſtle, concerning the Sick being anointed with Oil, and having their Sins forgiven, and their bodily diſeaſes at the ſame Time miraculouſly cured; is built the ſuperſtitious *Sacrament* of *extreme Unction*. And becauſe St. *Paul*, in his comparing Matrimony with the ſpiritual Union between Chriſt and his Church, calls That Similitude a great *Myſtery*, which word *Myſtery* the *Latin* tranſlator ignorantly and ridiculouſly renders *a great Sacrament*; hence *Matrimony* is, with *Them*, another *Sacrament*. And innumerable other Things of the like Nature there are among them, of which St. *Paul* would have ſaid, with greater earneſtneſs than even of the *Jewiſh Obſervations* themſelves; *The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt.*

SERMON XXX.

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus explained.

LUKE xvi. 25.

But Abraham *said*: *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise* Lazarus *evil things; but now He is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

OUR Saviour in the *Beginning* of this chapter, shews by the Parable of the unjust Steward, *what* is the true and wise Use of Riches. ver. 9; *I say unto you, Make to yourselves Friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you,* (it ought to have been rendred, *ye may be received,*) *into everlasting Habitations.* By the *mammon of unrighteousness*, is not here meant *Riches unjustly gotten*, but *Riches* in general; the *false*, the *uncertain*, the *transitory* Riches of this present World: As appears plainly from the Use of the same word in other places, and particularly from the following part of This very Parable, ver. 11; where *unrighteous* is expressly opposed, not to *righteous* or *just*, but to *True* or *Permanent*: *If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon*, that is, in the Use of the *uncertain and transitory Riches* of this *present* Life,

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Who will commit to your Truſt the True Riches, the *permanent* and *unchangeable* Riches of *Eternity*? The Senſe therefore of our Lord's Exhortation, is: Employ in ſuch a manner, in the ways of Juſtice, Equity, Sobriety and Charity, theſe *falſe*, *uncertain* and *tranſitory* Riches *here*; that *hereafter* ye may be found worthy to be intruſted with an *unchangeable and everlaſting* Poſſeſſion.

Having thus declared what was the *True and Wiſe Uſe* of Riches, our Saviour proceeds in the *latter part* of this Chapter, (by way of Reproof to the *Phariſees* who *were covetous and derided him*, ver. 14; he proceeds) to ſhow, by the Parable of the *Rich Man* and *Lazarus*, that Thoſe who had great Superiority, and exalted themſelves highly in the *preſent World*, were not always of Eſteem in the Sight of God, or in the way of being Happy in the *World to come*. *There was* (ſays he) *a certain Rich Man, which was clothed in Purple and fine Linnen, and fared ſumptuouſly every day.* This *rich man died, and was buried*: And *in hell, lifting up his Eyes in Torments, and ſeeing Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his Boſom*; he begged of him to *ſend Lazarus, that he might dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool* his *Tongue*; *for* he was *tormented in* That *flame*. The Anſwer our Lord puts in the Mouth of the Patriarch, is, in the Words of my Text: *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedſt thy good things, and likewiſe Lazarus evil things: But now He is comforted, and Thou art tormented.*

The Firſt thing that obviouſly offers itſelf in theſe words, as worthy of particular Obſervation, is; that our Lord here repreſents a Perſon tormented in the Flames of Hell; and, when his petition for mercy is rejected, there are *not* expreſsly charged upon him any Great and Enormous *Vices*; but, *what* his peculiar Crimes were, is left to be *collected only* from the Circumſtances of the whole Parable compared together; and he is here barely put in mind, that he had already *in his Life-time received* his *Good things*, as *Lazarus* had received *Evil things*. It was very natural to have expected, that the Patriarch ſhould here have *expreſsly* charged him with *revelling* and *drunkenneſs*, with *waſting his Subſtance in riotous living*, *as* the *Prodigal* in the fore-going Chapter is deſcribed to have done. Or he might have been charged *plainly and explicitly*, with *Cruelty* and *Uncharitableneſs* towards the Poor. He might have been told *diſtinctly* and with many *aggravating* circumſtances, that ſince, when he lived in eaſe and plenty and in the abundant enjoyment of all the good things of life, he had ſhown no regard to the miſerable State of the *Poor* Man; he had no reaſon to expect, now that the Scale was turned, and Himſelf fallen into a State of Miſery, that the *Poor* Man ſhould leave That place of Happineſs which is figured to us by *Abraham*'s Boſom, to come and quench the Violence of the Flame that tormented *Him*. He might have been told, that it was but juſt, ſince he had *ſhown* no Mercy, none ſhould *be ſhown* to *Him*; and that he ſhould *receive* no Relief from the *poor man* after Death, to whom he had *given* none when he was Alive. All this, I ſay, it was natural to have expected, ſhould have been highly and ſeverely aggravated upon him. But our Lord does *not* introduce the Patriarch *expreſsly charging* him with *Any* of theſe *Vices*. On the contrary, what *Abraham*'s Reply directly *charges* him with, does not obviouſly and at firſt ſight appear to be *Criminal*: *Son, remember that Thou in thy life-time receivedſt thy good things.* The Character given of him in the introduction of the Parable, is; that he was *cloathed in Purple and fine linnen, and fared ſumptuouſly every day.* And as his Quality or Station in the World may be ſuppoſed to have been, there is no Impoſſibility but he might be conceived to have done this, without the imputation of any Scandalous Exceſſes. Differences of Station, there muſt be in the World. 'Tis plainly the Will of God, that there *ſhould* be ſuch; and that they ſhould be ſupported with proper Marks of Diſtinction. Luxury does not conſiſt in the innocent enjoyment of any of the good things, which God has created to be received with Thankfulneſs; but in the waſtful Abuſe of them to vicious Purpoſes, in ways inconſiſtent with Sobriety, Juſtice, or Charity. The exceeding plenty in which *Solomon* is deſcribed to have lived, 1 *Kings* iv. 22; is not laid to his charge as

a *Sin*

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a *Sin*, but remarked as an Inſtance of God's Bleſſing upon him, and of the fulfilling That Promiſe made to him upon his deſiring Wiſdom and an underſtanding Heart; ch. iii. 13. *I have alſo given thee that which thou haſt not asked, both Riches and Honour, ſo that there ſhall not be Any among the Kings like unto thee all thy days.* And even in the *New Teſtament*, wherein the *Future State* is more clearly revealed; ſtill *Godlineſs* (with an exception always to the caſe of *Perſecution*,) *has the Promiſe of* This *life* alſo, as well as of *That which is to come.* And They who *are Rich in This World*; 1 Tim. vi. 17; are not threatned as if they ſhould be *miſerable in the Next World*, for *This reaſon only* becauſe God had bleſſed them in *This*; but they are *charged, not to be high-minded, nor* truſt in *uncertain Riches, but in the Living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy: That they do good, that they be Rich in good Works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in ſtore for themſelves a good Foundation againſt the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life.*

This therefore being the caſe; that the *Rich man* in this parable is not, as might have been natural to expect, charged *in plain and expreſs words* with the Practice of any *direct Vice*; and yet it being infinitely certain, that *nothing but Vice* can be the real Cauſe of any Man's *coming into that place of Torment:* What remains, is,

Firſt, That we enquire from the whole Scope of our Lord's Diſcourſe, and collect from the ſeveral Circumſtances of the Parable compared together, *What* the *Vices* were, which Chriſt here intended to condemn in the perſon of this Rich Man, and to warn his Hearers againſt. And,

Secondly, That we conſider *What* the *Reaſon* might be, (For there could not but be *Some* particular *Reaſon*,) *why* our Lord choſe to expreſs himſelf in this manner; not naming *expreſly*, and *in plain words*, any *particular Vice*; but *having it to be collected* from the whole Series of the Parable.

I *Firſt*; We muſt collect from the whole Scope of our Lord's Diſcourſe, and from all the Circumſtances of the Parable compared together, *What* the *Vices* were, which Chriſt here intended to condemn in the perſon of this Rich Man, and to warn his Hearers againſt. And,

1*ſt*, That, *in general*, our Lord intended it ſhould be underſtood, that the perſon he ſets forth under this parabolical repreſentation, was not merely a State of Proſperity, but a really *Vicious* character; appears plainly from the deſcription the Rich Man is introduced as giving of his *five brethren*, ver. 28, 30. The whole Diſcourſe ſuppoſes them to be perſons of the *ſame* manner of Life with their Rich Brother. And this their manner of Life was, what ſhowed them to have no Regard to the Exhortations of *Moſes and the Prophets*; 'Twas what made it deſirable and neceſſary, in the Rich Man's judgment, that one ſhould be ſent on purpoſe *to Teſtify unto them, leſt they alſo* ſhould *come into That place of Torment*; 'Twas a courſe of Life, which muſt needs bring them to deſtruction, if they did not *repent*; and which, *if one went unto them from the Dead*, (he thought) *they* Would *repent* of, though they would not at preſent *hear Moſes and the Prophets.* This plainly ſhows, that our Lord intended in this Parable to be underſtood to repreſent, not merely a State of Proſperity, but *in general* a really *Vicious* character.

2*dly*, 'Tis probable, *in particular*, that our Saviour intended to give an intimation of the Danger of the Sin of *Uncharitableneſs*, when he repreſents *Lazarus* lying in a very miſerable condition at the Rich Man's Door, and *deſiring to be fed with the Crumbs that fell from his Table.* For though he does not *expreſly* put the caſe, that the *Poor man* found *no relief* in thoſe circumſtances; yet ſince, on the contrary, it is neither expreſſed in the Hiſtorical part of the Parable, nor pleaded by the Rich Man in his Own behalf, that there *was* any Relief given; it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe that our Lord intended to be underſtood, as making *Uncharitableneſs* a part of the *Character* repreſented under this Parable.

3*dly*, It is probable, for the ſame reaſon, that *Luxurious Rioting and Drunkenneſs* was likewiſe *in particular* deſigned to be reproved in this parabolical re-

SERM. XXX. preſentation. For though *This Vice* alſo does not *expreſly* enter into the *Character* here ſet forth; and all that we read upon *This head*, is, that the Rich man was *cloathed in Purple and fine Linnen, and fared ſumptuouſly every day*; yet ſince, in *This reſpect* alſo, neither in the Hiſtorical part of the Parable, nor in the Rich man's Plea for Mercy, is there any intimation of any *Guard againſt* theſe Exceſſes, or of any *Good Uſe* made of his Riches and Grandeur; but, on the contrary, the *Whole* is an expreſs Character of a perſon *Condemned*, and of one having *no Apology* to make for *Himſelf*; it is reaſonable to conclude, that *This Vice* alſo was by our Lord intended to be underſtood as Part of the *Character* here repreſented.

4*thly*, From the particularly remarkable expreſſion in my Text, *Remember that thou in thy life-time receivedſt thy Good things*, compared with the other parts of the Parable; it is plain that our Lord's *Principal View* in this whole Diſcourſe, was to warn Men of the danger of That *Worldly-mindedneſs*, of That *Heedleſſneſs* concerning matters of *Religion*, of that total *Intentneſs* upon *preſent Pleaſure and Profit*, which is not ſo much itſelf a *particular Vice*, but rather the *Foundation of All Vices*. 'Tis That, which makes Men *regardleſs* of *Futurity*, and not to have *God in All their Thoughts*. 'Tis That *Deceitfulneſs of Riches*, and the *Care of Other things*, of Ambition and Voluptuouſneſs; which, our Lord tells us in Another Parable, *chokes the Word*, (ſtifles all Notions of Religion,) *and it becometh unfruitful*. 'Tis That Temper, which expoſes a Man to *Every Temptation* of *Any kind*; and makes him continually ready to ſacrifice the Intereſt of Truth and Virtue, whenever it happens to come in competition with the *Good Things* of this preſent Life, the *Good things* on which alone his Heart is entirely ſet. This *Character* is in a very lively manner ſet forth by the Pſalmiſt; *Pſ.* xlix. 6; *There be ſome that put their Truſt in their Goods, and boaſt themſelves in the multitude of their Riches:—They think that their Houſes ſhall continue for ever, and that their dwelling-places ſhall endure from one generation to another:—He ſhall carry nothing away with him when he dieth, neither ſhall his Pomp follow him:—Man being in Honour has no Underſtanding, but is compared unto the Beaſts that periſh.* An eloquent deſcription of the *like perſons*, we meet with in the Book of *Job*, ch. xxi. 9; *Their Houſes are ſafe from Fear, neither is the Rod of God upon them:—They take the Timbrel and Harp, and rejoice at the Sound of the Organ: They ſpend their days in Wealth, and in a moment go down to the Grave: Therefore they ſay unto God, depart from us, for we deſire not the Knowledge of thy ways: What is the Almighty, that we ſhould ſerve him? and what Profit ſhould we have, if we pray unto him?* The *ſame Temper* is again ſet forth by our Saviour in *Another* Parable, *Luke* xii. 16; *The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plenteouſly. And he thought within himſelf, ſaying, What ſhall I do, becauſe I have no Room where to beſtow my Fruits? And he ſaid, This will I do: I will pull down my Barns, and build greater; and there will I beſtow all my Fruits and my Goods. And I will ſay to my Soul; Soul, thou haſt much Goods laid up for many years; take thine eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry.* 'Tis the perfect character of a perſon whoſe *Treaſure* was upon Earth, and his *Heart* and Affections placed entirely *There* alſo: Who looked not at all upon Riches, Honour, Power, and other worldly Advantages, as *Talents* committed to his Charge, to be employed as Means and Opportunities of Good, of promoting and encouraging Truth, Virtue, Juſtice, and Charity in the World; (which is what our Saviour calls *being Rich towards God*;) But he eſteemed them merely as Inſtruments of Luxury, Pride, and Vanity: In the midſt of which Folly, *God ſaid unto him, Thou Fool, this night ſhall thy Soul be required of thee; then whoſe ſhall all theſe things be, which thou haſt provided?*

5*thly*, That our Lord's *View and Deſign* in the deſcription he gives of the State of the *Rich Man* and *Lazarus* after their Deaths, is what I have now repreſented; may be ſtill further confirmed from the *connexion and coherence* of his *Whole Diſcourſe*, and from the *Occaſion* of his ſpeaking the Parable. The Phariſees and Chief Men among the *Jews*, in our Saviour's time, were extremely proud and vain-glorious, covetous and ambitious; *deſiring to walk in long*

long robes; *loving the higheſt Seats in the Synagogues, and the chief Rooms at Feaſts*; *making long Prayers for a Shew* before Men, and at the ſame time *devouring Widows Houſes*. Concerning theſe perſons, our Lord declares no leſs than three ſeveral times in the *ſixth Chapter of* St. *Matthew*, that in the *Praiſe of Men*, which their Hypocriſy and Worldly Grandeur procured them, *they had their Reward*; but at the hands of God, for their Real Wickedneſs, *the ſame* perſons, ſays he, *ſhall receive greater Damnation*. To *Theſe mens* corruptions, almoſt *all* our Lord's Diſcourſes through the Whole Goſpel, have a *perpetual* View. With regard to Theſe *particularly* in *this chapter* whereof *my Text* is a part, our Saviour warns his Diſciples, ver. 13; *No man can ſerve two Maſters: For either he will hate the one, and love the Other; or elſe he will hold to the One, and deſpiſe the Other: Ye cannot ſerve God and Mammon.* Theſe Admonitions, the Evangeliſt obſerves, ver. 14; that *the Phariſees, who were Covetous, heard, and derided him.* Whereupon Jeſus replied to them, ver. 15; *Ye are they which juſtify yourſelves before Men, but God knoweth your Hearts: For that which is highly eſteemed amongſt Men, is abomination in the Sight of God.* And then, as an illuſtration and confirmation of That aſſertion, he *concludes* his Diſcourſe with the *Parable of the Rich man and Lazarus*, ver. 19: Wherein is repreſented in the ſtrongeſt and moſt affectionate manner, how Riches and Power and Grandeur, and all thoſe Advantages for which men are generally ſo highly valued in the *preſent World*; are no Marks at all of *God*'s Final *Favour*: For that in the *next World* God will judge entirely by Other meaſures, and will have No regard to any thing but to the *Virtues* taught in the *Law and the Prophets*; So that Many of thoſe who are *Firſt* here, ſhall There be *Laſt*, and the *Laſt* ſhall be *Firſt*.

SERM. XXX. Luke xx. 2, 5, 16. Luke xx. 47.

II. *Secondly*, Having thus at large explained the *Nature* and *Deſign* of the *Parable*; it remains in the *Second* place, that we conſider *What* the *Reaſon* might be, why our Lord choſe in This Parable not to name *expreſly* and *in plain words* any *particular Vice*, for which he repreſents the Rich man condemned; but to *leave it* rather *to be collected*, from the Whole Series of the Parable. And,

1*ſt*, Since it is plain from the Introduction, ver. 14, 15; that our Lord intended here to reprove the *Covetous* and *Proud Phariſees*; it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that he thought proper to expreſs himſelf after *This manner*, as being more *likely* to *take effect*, and that the Phariſees might the more *readily* apply the Parable to *Themſelves*. Had our Lord aggravated the *Particular Vices* of the rich man, whom he here repreſents as condemned; the Phariſees probably would thereupon in their own Minds have *thanked God, that they were not as Other Men are*, guilty of *This* or the *Other* particular Vice, *or even as this rich Man*. But, in the manner our Saviour *Now* worded his deſcription; their Own Hearts, how great ſoever their Pride was, could not but tell them they were ſuch perſons as he deſcribes; and that All their *Grandeur*, and there being *highly eſteemed among Men*, was of no advantage before *God* the Judge of Hearts. And this could not but naturally lead them, (ſuch of them as had Any ſenſe of Religion at all,) to conſider and collect from the whole Series of the Diſcourſe, *what* were the *Vices* for which the *Rich man* was condemned.

2*dly*, Another and (I ſuppoſe) the Principal Reaſon, why our Lord choſe to expreſs himſelf in this *general* and *leſs explicit* manner, without mentioning *in plain and direct words* Any *One* Vice *in particular*; was, that he might *raiſe the Attention* of his Diſciples, to be aware of the Great *Danger* and numerous *Temptations*, to which an uninterrupted State of *Worldly Proſperity* does continually expoſe Men. He *expreſly* repreſents the *Rich man*, as condemned to the Place of Torment; But *What* his *Vices* were, he leaves to be *collected* from the *Circumſtances* of the *whole* Parable; intimating, that no Man could be ignorant, *what* are the Temptations incident to ſuch a State. *Riches*, *Honour*, *Power*, *Reputation*, and other the like Worldly Advantages, it is evident, are not themſelves *criminal*; nay, on the contrary, they are real *Bleſſings* of Providence;

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Talents, by the right Uſe of which, Men may obtain a great Regard; *laying up in ſtore for themſelves a good Foundation againſt the Time to come, that they may attain eternal Life.* But *Who*, that knows the nature of Mankind, and obſerves what has *generally* happened in the experience of All Ages and Nations; *Who* can aſſure himſelf, if he was to be inveſted with *arbitrary Power and Dominion*, that he could execute That Truſt without any of that *Tyrannical Spirit*, which the Governours of this World have generally been ſo fond of? *Who* can rely upon himſelf before-hand, that if he was to be advanced to the higheſt Pitch of *Honour and Grandeur*, he ſhould wholly ſtand clear of all that *Pride and Inſolence*, which has ſo frequently accompanied Other men's *Ambition?* *Who* can be ſure, if he ſhould on a ſudden find himſelf ſurrounded with *immenſe Riches*, with *Eaſe and Plenty and Flattery* on all ſides, that he could reſiſt all thoſe Temptations to *Voluptuouſneſs and Luxury*, by which Thouſands and ten thouſands have been ruined before him? For *This reaſon* our Lord, in almoſt all his Diſcourſes, ſeems as it were to *affect* always, upon *This head*, to uſe the *ſtrongeſt* and to *Us* ſurprizing Expreſſions. *Wo unto you that are Rich, for ye have received your Conſolation*: And, *'Tis eaſier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a Rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.* The Senſe, as I have ſhown, is; not that the Poſſeſſion or Enjoyment of the Bleſſings of Providence in this life, is itſelf criminal; but that the *Temptations* to *abuſe* thoſe Bleſſings, are *Many* and *Great*, and require an excellent Temper of Mind to overcome them. The *Intention* of Chriſt, in ſo *frequently repeating* his Admonitions of *This* ſort, was *twofold*. That it might be matter of *Comfort* to the *Poor*, to conſider, that *virtuous Poverty* is no mark at all of the Divine diſpleaſure; but *particularly*, when occaſioned by Perſecution for righteouſneſs ſake, it entitles Men on the contrary to an extraordinary Reward. And on the other ſide, that he might give *perpetual Caution* to the *Rich*, that they *ſo* uſe the things of this *preſent World*, as that the ultimate Deſign of all their Actions may have a conſtant View to *That which is to come.* By *This means* only, can they be effectually ſecured, from falling into the ſame *Fault* with the Rich man in this Parable, and into the ſame *condemnation.* Conſider always, that *This World* is not our final State: In all things *whatſoever thou takeſt in hand, remember the End, and thou ſhalt never do amiſs*; Eccluſ. vii. 36.

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Of the equitable Diſtribution of Things at the laſt Day.

1 PET. iv. 17, 18.

For the time is come, that Judgment muſt begin at the Houſe of God: And if it firſt begin at Us, what ſhall the End be of them that obey not the Goſpel of God; And if the Righteous ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear.

AS Men who govern themſelves continually by Regards to Reaſon and Truth, by Principles of Virtue and Religion, by the Rules of Juſtice and Integrity; muſt neceſſarily at *all* times, in the courſe of a vicious and debauched World, ſubject themſelves to ſome Inconveniences, which Others eaſily avoid; and deny themſelves ſome Gratifications and Advantages, wherein Others place their chief Happineſs of Life: So at *ſome particular* Times, and in ſome *particular* Circumſtances and Situations of Things; in times particularly of great Oppreſſion and Tyranny, in Times and Places of great Superſtition and Bigottry, in times of prevailing Errours in matters of Religion, Errours violent in their Nature and univerſal in their Extent; in *Theſe* caſes (I ſay) more *particularly*, Men of the greateſt

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'Twas, at the time of St. *Peter*'s writing this Epiſtle, (as it has been indeed at all *other* times before and after, both under the *Jewiſh* and under the *Chriſtian* Diſpenſation, and under the State of *Nature* too,) a queſtion of conſiderable difficulty; *whence* it comes to paſs, that God, who is as *certainly pleaſed* with Mens adhering at all times to *Truth and Virtue*, as we are *certain* of his *Exiſtence* at all; has yet ſo frequently thought fit to permit the *beſt* and moſt *valuable* Men, (if *Truth* and *Virtue* be of *Any Value*,) to be liable in many caſes to undergo the greateſt of Sufferings; and to become, of all Men upon Earth, poſſibly the moſt miſerable. To This the Apoſtle replies, in This and the foregoing Chapters; that they who *ſuffer* at any time, not as Malefactors, but *according to the Will of God*, ver. 19; have abundant reaſon to *commit the keeping of their Souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator*; There being in the Order and Method, and in the Nature of the general and perhaps neceſſary Laws of God's Government of the Univerſe, *many wiſe Reaſons*, (ſome of which we know, and others it is no wonder we ſhould at preſent be ignorant of,) why things are for a time permitted to be in ſuch a diſorderly ſtate. That, *One* reaſon *in particular* is, that *the Tryal of* mens *Faith*, (ch. i. 7,) *being much more precious than of Gold that periſhes though it be tried with Fire, might be found unto praiſe and honour and glory, at the appearing of Jeſus Chriſt.* That *Suffering* at any time for well-doing, is *not* a thing to *be aſhamed* of, (ch. iv. 16;) but on the contrary to be looked upon as a *glorifying of God*, and doing Honour to Truth and Virtue. That *Afflictions* of different kinds, have in all Ages been *accompliſhed* (ch. v. 9;) *in our Brethren that are in the world.* That even *Chriſt* himſelf went before us in This reſpect, (ch. ii. 21; *leaving us an Example, that we ſhould follow his Steps.* And that therefore good Men ought never to *think it ſtrange concerning the fiery Tryal which is to try them*; *as though ſome ſtrange thing happened unto them*; ch. iv. 12: *For the time is come*, ſaith he, *that Judgment muſt begin at the houſe of God: And if it firſt begin at Us, what ſhall the End be of them that obey not the Goſpel of God? And if the Righteous ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear?*

I. *Firſt*; *The* Time *is come, that Judgment muſt begin.* Theſe words ſuppoſe, (which is the *Firſt particular* obſervable in my Text; and which, in the nature of *all Government*, is a thing neceſſary in itſelf;) that, in the Order and Method of God's Government of the Univerſe, there muſt be certain *Periods of Time*, certain proper *Seaſons*, (to be determined by the Wiſdom of Him who ruleth over All;) for *Judgments of Correction*, upon thoſe who are capable of Amendment or Improvement; and *Judgments of Condemnation*, upon thoſe who are finally worthy of Deſtruction. Without *This* Diſpoſition of things *in general*, there would be no ſuch thing in the World, as Government *at all.* God would indeed be an All-skilful *Artificer*, or Author of the Univerſe, as his *Workmanſhip*; and an All-powerful *Lord*, and Diſpoſer of all things, as his *Property*: But he would have *No* Kingdom or Dominion over *Subjects*; He would be No *Legiſlator*, Moral *Governour*, or *Judge*, having Rule over *rational* and *free* Agents. And were not the Order and Method of things *ſo* diſpoſed *in particular*, as that there were certain *Times* appointed, and proper *Seaſons* for Judgment, after the accompliſhment of the reſpective *Periods* of certain great and long-connected Events; but *Juſtice* were *immediately* executed, every moment: There could be no proper *Tryals* of many particular *Virtues*; there could be no *Space* for *Repentance*, *Correction*, and *Amendment*; there could be no manifeſtation of the *Depth of the Riches both of the Wiſdom and Knowledge of God*, and of the other Attributes of the divine Nature, in the great

great Revolutions of Providence, and in the various Dispensations of his Goodness and Mercy in different Ages and Nations. In the Reason and Nature of things therefore, and in the Method of God's All-wise Government; there must be, at the *Consummation and Period* of any System of Rational Creatures, (such as *Mankind* are,) a *General Judgment*, for the final *Separation and Punishment* of the incorrigible: And, at *intermediate* times, *particular Judgments*; for the *Tryal* and *Improvement* of *Virtue*, and for the *Correction* and *Amendment* of such as are capable of being reformed; that, as the Scripture expresses it, they may *be purified, and made white and tried*; Dan. xii. 10.

II. *Secondly*; *Judgment must* begin at the House of God: This is the *Second Particular*, observable in the Text; The *Persons*, upon whom *Judgment* must *first* begin. The *Kingdom* of God, or his *Dominion absolutely*, is over *All*; over those who *know* him, and those who *know* him not, over those who *obey* his Laws, and those who regard them *not*. But the *House* or *Family of God*, or (as it is sometimes called in Scripture) the *Household of Faith*, are Those only, who *know God*, and *acknowledge* him as their *Father*; professing to *obey* his *Will*, and to govern themselves by his *Laws*. These are always represented as being his *Children* and his *Servants*; while the *Ungodly* and *Profane*, are spoken of as *Enemies*. Now the same Perfections of the Divine Nature, and the same essential Rules of Government, which require that God should finally *destroy* his incorrigible *Enemies*; require likewise, that he should *correct* the Imperfections of his *Servants*, and by proper Tryals, *improve* and *confirm* the Virtue of such as are capable of *Amendment*. *God*, is (in the language of the Gospel-Parables) the Supreme *Householder*; the *Father of All*; the *Father, of whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named*; Eph. iii. 15. In This Household or Family of God, *Christ* governs *as a Son, over his own House*; Heb. iii. 6: *Moses*, was *faithful in* it, *as a Servant*, ver. 5: And so were the rest of the Prophets and Apostles. All *virtuous and good men*, in all Ages and in All Nations, and under All Dispensations of Religion; under the Light of Nature, under the Law of *Moses*, and under the Gospel of *Christ*; are of this *Household of Faith, Children of God*, obeying his Commandments, trusting in his Providence, and waiting for the accomplishment of his Promises in due Season. God, who best knows the Method of his own Government, and the Reasons of that Method; who best knows the Ways of bringing about his own Purposes, and what is in itself best absolutely and finally in the whole; has in his infinite Wisdom thought fit to appoint, that, in this present State, his Children and Servants, those who in my Text are stiled *The House of God*, should, generally speaking, have their Faith and Patience tried with Difficulties and Discouragements of various kinds. Concerning *Christ* himself, the Apostle tells us, it was what the Method and all-wise Reasons of God's universal Government required; it was what *became Him, from whom are all things, and by whom are all things*; that, *in bringing many Sons unto Glory*, he should *make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through Sufferings*; Heb. ii. 10. And it is a very extraordinary Expression, which he adds upon This head, ch. v. 8; that Christ our great High Priest, *though he were a Son, yet learned he Obedience by the things which he suffered*. Now, (to use our Lord's own Argument,) if these things are spoken concerning the *Master of the House*, *how much more* concerning *them of his Household?* For *the Disciple is not above his Master, nor the Servant above his Lord*; *It is enough for the Disciple that* he be as his Master, and the *Servant as his Lord*; Matt. x. 25. The *Patriarchs* of old, though they were in a peculiar manner the Servants of God, and Heirs of the Promises; and *Abraham* particularly, by a very singular and distinguishing Appellation, stiled *the Friend of God*, Jam. ii. 23; yet with so many Difficulties were they perpetually tried, that *they confessed they were* only *Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth*; Heb. xi. 31. *Moses*, though by divine Appointment the Leader of God's People; yet his undertaking of That Office, is in Scripture stiled his *chusing to suffer* Affliction *with the people of God*, and his *esteeming of the* Reproach *of Christ* to be *greater Riches than the Trea-*

SERM. XXXI. *ſures in Egypt*; ver. 25, 26. After This, in the Ages before the Coming of Chriſt, the *Condition* of thoſe Perſons, concerning whom the Apoſtle declares, that of *Them the World was not worthy*, Heb. xi. 38; The *Condition* (I ſay) and the *State of Life* of theſe Perſons was, that they *had Tryal of cruel Mockings and Scourgings, yea moreover of Bonds and Impriſonment*; And that they *wandered about,---being deſtitute, afflicted, tormented*; ver. 36, 37. Our *Lord himſelf*, and his *Apoſtles*, met with the like Treatment *themſelves*; And both *He* and *They*, conſtantly teſtified to their Followers in the generations to come, that *All who would live godly in Chriſt Jeſus, ſhould* (in ſome manner or other) *ſuffer Perſecution*: In *Some* Ages, and in *Some* Countries, from the Malice of unbelieving *Jews* and *Heathens*: At *other* Times, and in *other* Places, from the Bigottry of Idolatrous and tyrannical *Chriſtians*: And that, at *all* Times and in *all* Places, even *where* Chriſtianity ſhould be moſt univerſally profeſſed, and *when* it might ſeem moſt to Proſper; ſtill Men of Truth and Virtue ſhould continue perpetually expoſed to Inconveniencies and Diſadvantages of diverſe kinds, from the ſtrong Prejudices and manifold Iniquities of a vicious and debauched World. The Reaſon, *one* Reaſon at leaſt, why, in the Courſe of Providence, theſe things *muſt* be; is for the *Trial* of Mens *Faith*, as St. *Peter* expreſſes it, 1 *Pet.* i. 7; for the *Trial* of their *Fidelity*, of their Stedfaſtneſs to the Principles of Truth and Virtue. That *they which are approved*, that is, who are *Proof* againſt the Temptations of an unrighteous World; *may be made manifeſt*; 1 Cor. xi. 19. Hence the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* exhorts, ch. xii 5; *My Son, deſpiſe not thou the chaſtening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth, he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every Son whom he receiveth.* Not *for* his *own Pleaſure*, ver. 10; *but for Our profit, that we might be partakers of his Holineſs*: For though *no chaſtening for the preſent ſeemeth to be joyous, but grievous*; *nevertheleſs afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of Righteouſneſs, unto Them which are exerciſed thereby*, ver. 11.

2 Tim. iii. 12.

Now from hence, by the Way, appears clearly the Folly and Vanity of the Popiſh Notion of *Purgatory*: Where Men are ſuppoſed to be tormented in ſuch a *manner*, and at ſuch *Time*, (after this State of *Probation* is entirely *over*;) that the Aſſerters of it do not *Themſelves* pretend that there is *There* Any *Trial* of Mens *Faith* or *Virtue*, or Any Room either for *Amendment* or *Improvement*: Which the Scripture expreſsly declares to be the End of all God's *Temporal Judgments*, and of all the *Afflictions* and *Chaſtiſements* which he ſends upon his children whom he *receives* and *loves*; Heb. xii. 6.

III. A *Third* Particular, worthy of diſtinct Obſervation, in the words of the Text; is That Severe Doctrine, which may ſeem to be included in the Suppoſition here put: *If the Righteous ſcarcely be ſaved.* That *Virtue* and *Righteouſneſs* ſhould be in Any Danger of being finally miſerable; or that, by Any Appointment of *God*, the Salvation of *Virtuous* and *Good men* ſhould become improbable or uncertain; is undoubtedly inconſiſtent with the Nature, and with the Perfections of *God*. But the Perſons to whom is here given the Denomination of *Righteous*, are Perſons conſidered as endued with *ſuch* Righteouſneſs, as does by no means give them a *Claim of Right* to Happineſs. They are *Righteous*; not in the Eye of the *Law* of *Righteouſneſs*, but in the *favourable* Conſtruction of the *Goſpel* of *Mercy*: Righteous, not by having *never tranſgreſſed* the Commands of God, but by having obtained *Forgiveneſs of their Sins* upon *Repentance*: Righteous, not in the Accounts of ſtrict *Juſtice*, but in the *gracious eſtimations* of *Goodneſs and Compaſſion.* They are *ſuch* Perſons as St. *Paul* had in view, when he ſpeaks of *God* as *juſtifying the ungodly*; Rom. iv. 5: *Saying, Bleſſed are they whoſe Iniquities are forgiven, and whoſe Sins are covered*: ver. 7. Now concerning *Such* Perſons, it is no great Wonder the Scripture ſhould ſpeak in ſuch manner, as to repreſent its being a thing *difficult* in *itſelf*, and an *extraordinary* Inſtance of *Goodneſs* in *God*, to bring them to be partakers of *Everlaſting Happineſs*. The Nature of God's

Juſtice,

Juſtice, and of the reſt of his divine *Perfections*; the neceſſary *Rules* and *Meaſures*, of his eternal *Government* over the Univerſe; and the *Qualifications*, eſſentially neceſſary to the State of *Heaven*; may very reaſonably make even the *beſt of Men* apprehenſive, that they can *very hardly* be thought *worthy* of That State. The *Extraordinarineſs* of the *Method* of God's manifeſting his Mercy, by the Incarnation of Chriſt: The ſingular *Condeſcenſion* of *our Saviour himſelf*, in being willing thus to take our Nature upon him; The greatneſs of the *Sufferings* he himſelf underwent, in this State of Humiliation; And the manifold Afflictions wherewith God hath thought fit that great Numbers of the beſt of his Servants, in almoſt every Age of the World, ſhould (as the Scripture expreſſes it) be *purified and made white and tried*; and with which the *Gate* has been *ſtraitened*, and the *Way to Life* has (as the word in the Original ſignifies) been *narrowed* and *beſet with Difficulties*: All theſe, are Conſiderations naturally and neceſſarily leading us to This Apprehenſion, that the Salvation of Men, the exalting *ſuch* a kind of Creatures as ſinful Men are, to ſuch a State of Happineſs as the Goſpel propoſes; is not a matter, which, in the natural Progreſs of Things, might have been expected to be accompliſhed *in courſe*; but is certainly a very *great*, and, in the Method of God's eternal Government over the Univerſe, an *extraordinary* Effect of the Divine *Goodneſs and Mercy*. This is the *leaſt* that can be meant, by That Expreſſion of the Apoſtle in my Text; *If the Righteous ſcarcely be ſaved*. And the Deſign of it, is; not to terrify and diſcourage Men, in the practice of Virtue; but, on the contrary, to convince them of the indiſpenſable Neceſſity of a real and effectual Amendment of Manners; and to ſhow them the reaſonableneſs of Patience and Contentment under ſuch Afflictions and Difficulties, wherewith God, who knows better what is uſeful for them than they can poſſibly judge for themſelves, thinks fit at any time to make Tryal of their Faith and Conſtancy.

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Dan. xii. 10.

Matt. vii. 14.

IV. *Fourthly* and *Laſtly*; The *Laſt* thing obſervable in the words of my Text, is the *Inference* the Apoſtle here draws from the Obſervation he had laid down: *If judgment muſt begin at the Houſe of God*, and even *the Righteous ſcarcely be ſaved*; then *What ſhall the End be of them that obey not the Goſpel?* and *Where ſhall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear?* This is indeed *juſt* matter of *Terrour* to *Wicked and Profane* Men: And therefore, *knowing the Terrour of the Lord, we perſwade men*; 2 Cor. v. 11. *The Ax is now laid to the Root of the Trees*, according to *John the Baptiſt*'s deſcription of the Goſpel-Diſpenſation: And *every Tree which bringeth not forth good Fruit*, ſhall certainly be *hewn down and caſt into the Fire*: Wherefore, *Bring forth* (ſays he) *Fruits worthy of Repentance*; Luke iii. 8, 9. The Prophet *Ezekiel*, deſcribing in figurative Language the final Deſtruction of the Wicked, repreſents the Lord giving Command to the deſtroying Angel, ch. ix. 6; *Slay utterly old and young*, (except ſuch as are There directed to be ſpared;) *And begin*, ſaith he, *at my Sanctuary*. It is probably the *very Expreſſion* alluded to by the *Apoſtle* in my Text: *Judgment muſt begin at the Houſe of God*. In like manner in *Jeremiah*, God in prophetical Language Thus threatens the wicked Nations of the Earth, ch. xxv. 29; *Lo, I begin to bring evil on the City which is called by my Name; and ſhould Ye be utterly unpuniſhed?* The Senſe is the ſame, as of thoſe words of *Solomon*, (which in the *Greek* Tranſlation are the *very words* of St. *Peter* in my Text;) *Prov.* xi. 31; *Behold, the Righteous ſhall be recompenſed in the Earth*, (that is, ſhall be puniſhed for their Offences;) *much more the Wicked and the Sinner*. What our Saviour ſaid upon another Occaſion, *Luke* xxiii. 31, may very properly be applied Here; *If they do theſe things in a green tree, what ſhall be done in the dry?* If God's *Judgments of Correction* ſeem to us ſevere *Here*, what ſhall be his *Judgments of Deſtruction* Hereafter? If our preſent *Afflictions* which are *but for a moment*, ſeem grievous and unſupportable; then *who among us ſhall dwell with everlaſting Burnings?* Iſai. xxxiii. 14.

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Vicious and profane Men are very apt to flatter themſelves with Hopes of final Impunity, *always* from *groundleſs*, *often* from *inconſiſtent* and *contradictory* Arguments. *God*, they are ſure, is infinitely and eſſentially *Good*: Therefore they cannot perſwade themſelves, he will ever make them *miſerable*. Or, on the contrary; Many Men, they actually ſee and know, are under *very miſerable* Circumſtances: Therefore they cannot believe, that the World is under the Government of a *Good God*. *Both* theſe *Concluſions*, are abſurdly drawn from *Conjecture* againſt *Fact*; Whereas, on the contrary, all *True Reaſoning* proceeds, from Facts *at preſent* certainly known, to what may *conſequently* be expected hereafter. The *Being* and *Perfections* of *God*, are *abſolutely demonſtrable*; both in the *Nature of Things*, and from the *Frame of the Univerſe*. The *miſerable Circumſtances* of many perſons here upon Earth, is alſo a *certain Truth*; not depending on the Faith of remote Hiſtory, but ſeen every day in preſent Fact. What therefore vicious and unrighteous Men ſee with their own Eyes, that the Divine Perfections *can* permit to happen in this *preſent* time and place, and in a *mixed* World of *good* Men and *bad*; How can they expect it ſhould not be permitted *hereafter* in a much *greater degree* and in a more *laſting manner*, when the *Wicked* ſhall be ſeparated into a World *by themſelves*?

I ſhall conclude with the Addition of this One neceſſary Caution, upon account of many melancholy pious perſons; That, in like manner as the *Righteous* ſpoken of in the Text, are not Perſons in a State of *Innocency*, but *Penitent Sinners* not without *difficulty* ſaved; ſo *the ungodly and the Sinners* here threatned with ſuch ſeverity, are not *Sincere* perſons *overtaken with Faults*; but ſuch, of whom St. *Paul* ſays (1 *Tim.* i. 9,) that *the Law was made for the ungodly and for Sinners, for the unholy and profane, for Murderers and Whoremongers, for them that defile themſelves with mankind, for men ſtealers, for liars, for perjured perſons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to ſound doctrine.*

SERMON

SERMON XXXII.

Of GOD's disposing all Things to their proper Ends.

PROV. xvi. 4.

The Lord has made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

THE Book of *Proverbs* is a Collection of wise and useful Sayings and Observations, not put together in the way of a continued Discourse, but singly without any order or method: not in the way of a continued Discourse; but as Sentences of themselves pithy and momentous; and containing each of them singly, Matter of wise Instruction, and fit to be enlarged upon in our Meditations. The meaning therefore of any particular Doctrine laid down in this Book, is not ordinarily to be discovered (as in other Books of Holy Writ,) by comparing it with the Context going before or after; but is to be sought for only in the Words themselves, by considering their true and proper signification, examining them by other places of Scripture, and comparing them with the general Reason of things and the Analogy of Faith. The Words now read unto you, are a remarkable instance of this kind; having no Light afforded them from

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any thing in the Context; containing in themselves a very weighty and important Doctrine; yet not without considerable Difficulty and Ambiguity in the Expression. For if we take the Words in the Sense our Translators understood them, to signify that God created all things, merely for his own Glory and Pleasure; it is very hard to apply the latter part of the Words, as if God made the *Wicked* also for his own Pleasure, and on purpose to manifest his Power in their Destruction: And if we render the words *more properly* and *more agreeably* to the original, not, *the Lord has made all things for* himself; but, *the Lord has made all things suited* or *fitted each to other*; yet still it will deserve to be considered, how God can be said to have *made* or *fitted* the wicked to Destruction; *The Lord has made all things suitable to each other, yea even the wicked to the day of evil.* I shall *first* consider the Words in the Sense our Translators apprehend them; and *secondly* in that *other* Sense, which seems, according to the Original, to be their stricter and more proper signification; and wherein the *latter* part of the Text answers more directly to the *former*.

I. *First*, in the Sense according to which our Translation renders them, the *former* part of the Words contains a plain Doctrine, that *God created all things merely for his own good pleasure, without any external Motive*; The *latter* part contains a Question of great Difficulty, how God can be said to have made even the *wicked* for himself, for the manifesting of his Glory *in the Day* of Punishment; *The Lord has made all things for himself, yea even the wicked for the day of evil.*

1. In the *First* Sense of the Words, the former part of them contains a plain and evident Doctrine, that *God created all things merely for his own good pleasure, without any external Motive.* And indeed *external Motive* it is impossible *he* could have *Any*, when in the Universe there was *nothing* existing without himself; Other Motive, besides his own good pleasure, he possibly could have *none*, who was already Infinite in all Perfections, and absolutely Self-sufficient to his own Happiness. The *good Pleasure* of God therefore, is the only Reason why things were brought into Being at all; and *for himself* only *has the Lord made all things.* The Ignorance of debauched Imagination, and the Vanity of corrupt Philosophy departing from True Reason, made wicked and foolish Men of old, seek out for *other* causes of the Existence of Things. Some fancied the World eternal by Necessity of Nature; and were so absurd as to imagine, that it was a satisfactory account of the cause of the Existence of such an infinite Variety of things, to affirm that they existed without any cause at all. Others ascribed the Formation of this beautiful Fabrick of the World, to blind Chance; and were so foolish as to contend, that That which could not account for the Beauty and Contrivance of any single part, might yet be a sufficient cause of the Production of the Whole. But the Light of *natural Reason* itself, when carefully attended to, abundantly confuted these Follies; and to inquisitive Persons, *the invisible things of* God *from the Creation of the World* were *clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.* Yet because all Men had not leisure and abilities to study the Works of *Nature*, God was pleased to declare himself by a clear *Revelation* to Persons of *all* Capacities, to be the Creator of Heaven and Earth, and of all things that are therein. By *this* Character he made himself known to the Patriarchs and to the *Jews*, and distinguishes himself from Idols which are no Gods. Upon *this* account he is every where in the Old Testament described as receiving Glory, because that *by the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the Host of them by the breath of his Mouth:* and in the New Testament St. *John* in his Vision describes all Creatures praising God upon this account, and saying; *thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created*; Rev. iv. 11. *For his* Pleasure; that is, By his alone Will and All-powerful Command: Not that he himself stood in *want* of any thing; but only his *Goodness* moved him to bring Creatures into Being, *on* which he might *display* that Goodness, and *to* whom

whom he might *communicate* his Happineſs. This is ſometimes expreſſed otherwiſe, by God's doing things for his own *Glory*; Iſ. xliii. 7; *I have created him for my* Glory, *I have formed him, yea I have made him.* The *Glory of God*, is not any Thing properly relating to *himſelf*, any Advantage or Benefit to *Him*; but it is the communicating of his Goodneſs, by Creating the World; the promoting his Likeneſs among rational Creatures, by the Practice of Righteouſneſs; and the making them partakers according to their Capacities, of ſome degrees of that Happineſs, which in Himſelf is infinite and incomprehenſible as his Nature, and boundleſs as his unlimited Duration. This is the meaning of God's *making all things for himſelf*, who yet ſtands in want of Nothing: This is *his* eſtabliſhing a Kingdom in the World, whoſe Kingdom yet by Nature ruleth over all; This is *his* doing all things for his own Glory, whoſe Glory yet is capable of no Acceſſion. *for of him, and through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory and dominion for ever.* Rom. xi. 36.

2*dly*, The latter part of the Words, according to the preſent interpretation, contains a Queſtion of great Difficulty; How God can be ſaid to have *made even the* wicked *for himſelf*, for the manifeſting of his Glory *in the day of Puniſhment*; *The Lord has made all things for himſelf, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.* And here there have been ſome Men ſo very unreaſonable, ſo little regardful of the natural and unchangeable Perfections of God, and ſo little attentive to the true ſcope and deſign of the Scriptures, as to contend that God has *on purpoſe* made many Creatures neceſſarily inclined to Wickedneſs, that he might manifeſt his Power and Authority in their Deſtruction. As if the infinitely merciful and good God, whoſe tender Mercies are over all his Works, could take delight in the Miſery of his Creatures; or as if the Abſolute Sovereignty and Power of God, could be any ways advanced by the Deſtruction of finite Creatures, which, in reſpect of his incomprehenſible Greatneſs, are leſs than nothing and Vanity. No: Our very *Natural Notions* of God, aſcertain us that this is utterly inconſiſtent with the Nature of Him, who is perfect Goodneſs: And the *Revelation* he has made to us of himſelf in Scripture, is in nothing more full, than in this declaration, that the *Deſtruction* of Sinners is *from themſelves*, and that God has *no Pleaſure in the Death of him that dieth*; but only, as a Wiſe and Good Governour, he finds it neceſſary to cut off thoſe that will not be reformed. *God made not Death, neither has he pleaſure in the deſtruction of the Living*; *But ungodly men with their Works and Words called it unto them: For God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity*; *But through envy of the Devil came Death into the World, and they only who hold of his ſide do find it*; [Wiſd. i. 12.] or, as it is excellently expreſſed by the Author of the Book of Eccluſ; ch. xv. ver. 11; *Say not thou, it is through the Lord that I fell away*; *for thou oughteſt not to do the things that he hateth*; *Say not thou*, he *hath cauſed me to err*; *for he hath no need of the ſinful man*; *The Lord hateth all abomination*; *and they that fear God, love it not*; *He hath ſet before man life and Death*; *and whether him liketh, ſhall be given him*; *He hath commanded no man to do wickedly, neither hath he given any man licence to ſin.* His *Power* ſtands in no need of wicked men to accompliſh his deſigns, though he ſometimes makes uſe of them as the moſt proper Inſtruments; and his *Juſtice* makes it impoſſible he ſhould be the Author of Sin, in order to ſhow forth his Severity in the Puniſhment of it. Concerning the deſtruction even of the *Heathen* Nations, the *Jewiſh* Writer of the Book of *Wiſdom* declares honourably concerning God: *Who ſhall accuſe thee for the Nations that periſh, whom thou haſt made? For*, ſeeing *thou art righteous thy ſelf, thou ordereſt all things righteouſly*; *thinking it not agreeable with* Thy Power, *to condemn him that has not deſerved to be puniſhed.* Nothing therefore is more impoſſible, nothing more blaſphemous againſt God; than to imagine that *he* created any Beings, with *deſign* that they might be wicked and miſerable. Nevertheleſs, becauſe it is certain that nothing comes to paſs without his Permiſſion, nothing ſubſiſts but by his Power and Concurrence, nothing is done but by the Uſe or Abuſe of thoſe Faculties which *he* has created; Wiſd. i. 12. Wiſd. ii. 23. Wiſd. xii. 12.

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therefore in Scripture phrase, by a figurative Expression, and in acknowledgment of the Supreme Superintendency of Providence over all Events, *God* is represented as *doing* every thing that is *done* in the World. When a man is slain by accident, and without *any* ill Intention in him that did it; *God* is said to have *delivered* him into the hand of his Neighbour; *Exod.* xxi. 13. When Satan tempted *David* to number the people, as the Scripture expressly assures us, 1 *Chron.* xxi. 1; yet, because it could not be done without God's Permission, therefore the same Scripture elsewhere expresses it, as if *God* had moved *David* to number *Israel* and *Judah*; and sometimes speaks of God's *sending upon men an evil Spirit*, and God's *sending them strong delusion*, very figuratively and improperly speaking: for, speaking strictly and literally, as *God cannot be tempted with evil*, so *neither tempteth he any man*; Jam. i. 13. When any Calamity befals a Nation or People; because it cannot be without the Direction of Providence, *God* is represented as *Creating* a new thing; *Isa.* xlv. 7; *I form the Light, and create Darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I the Lord do all these things*: and *Amos* iii. 6; *Shall there be evil in a City, and the Lord has not done it?* Some have been so inconsiderate, [not to say profane,] as to understand these Passages, to signify God's *decreeing* all the Wickedness that is practised in the World; Whereas on the contrary, even of *natural* Evils, of Afflictions and Calamities, it is true only in a *figurative* Sense that they are of *God*'s creating; for properly and in reality, they are drawn down only by men upon *themselves*, by their own Wickedness and Incorrigibleness. When *good* Men, by the Knowledge and Assistances of the Gospel, sincerely obey the Will of God, and abound in Works of Piety and Righteousness; because it is *by grace* they *are saved*; because it is by the undeserved Mercy and Favour of God, that That Knowledge and that Assistance is granted to them; therefore they are stiled his *Workmanship*, created in *Christ Jesus unto good Works, which God hath before ordained that* they *should walk in them*; Eph. ii. 10. On the other hand, because wicked and incorrigible men are at length forsaken by the Spirit of God, and left in the hands of their own Counsel; the effect of which Desertion, is their becoming insensible and hardened in Habits of Sin; therefore *God* is said in some places, not *to have* given *them an heart to perceive, and eyes to see*; Deut. xxix. 4; nay, actually to make *the ears* of such people *heavy*, and to *shut their eyes, that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand*; which in other places is expressed by way of Complaint, because *they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand*; Matt. xiii. 14. In like manner, because wicked and disobedient Persons when they obstinately reject and oppose the Gospel; do exactly answer the Character by which the Prophets of old described such Persons in their Predictions; therefore they are said in Scripture to have been *before of old* ordained *to this condemnation*; Jude 4: to be *vessels of wrath* fitted *to destruction*; Rom. ix. 22; *whereunto also they were* appointed; 1 *Pet.* ii. 8: *fitted to destruction*; not by any Decree or Appointment of God; for on the contrary God is declared in the very same verse, to have *endured* them *with much* long-suffering, waiting for their Amendment: but *fitted* by their own Obstinacy for *that destruction*, which the Prophets foretold was *ordained* to come upon such Persons. When God by many repeated Trials made *Pharoah*'s Obstinacy conspicuous to the World, and his Punishment exemplarily remarkable; this is expressed in Scripture by *God*'s hardening *Pharaoh*'s heart, and *raising him up* (or making him eminent) *for the same purpose, that he might shew his Power in him, and that his Name might be declared throughout all the Earth*; Rom. ix. 17. And concerning wicked *Christian* Princes in corrupt times, God *hath put it in their hearts*, saith the Angel; *Rev.* xvii. 17; *to fulfil his Will, and to agree and give their Kingdom unto the Beast, i. e.* to the *Romish* Tyranny, *until the words of God shall be fulfilled. Lastly*, because God in every Work of Creation and Providence, and particularly in his distribution of Punishments to the Wicked, manifests his Power and Wisdom and Justice to the World; therefore in the Text God is represented as having *made all things for himself, yea even the wicked for the Day of evil.* In which

2 Sam. xxiv. 1. Judges ix. 23. Is. xxix. 10. 13. Ezek. xiv 9. 2 Thess. ii 11. 1 Kings xxii. 22. Job xii 16. Rev. xvii. 17.

Is. vi. 9. Mar. iv. 10.

which, and many other the like places, the Scripture using a figurative manner of Expreſſion, in aſcribing thoſe things to God, of which he is not properly and ſtrictly the Author, but which he only makes uſe of in the Wiſdom of Providence, as Inſtruments to bring about his juſt and wiſe deſigns; it is therefore a great abuſe and miſinterpretation of Scripture, to infer from any ſuch Paſſages as theſe, as if God was literally the Author or Cauſe of any man's Sin, or as if he made any man wicked, with *deſign* to manifeſt his Severity in making him miſerable. On the contrary, the Scripture in numberleſs plain places, which cannot be miſtaken, declares with ſufficient clearneſs the literal Meaning, which lies under theſe figurative Expreſſions; and it is obvious enough to any one that compares the different paſſages before cited, that this Expreſſion in the Text, that God has *made even the wicked for the day of evil*, can mean nothing more than, what in other words is thus expreſſed by *Job*, Job xxi. 30; *The wicked is* reſerved *to the day of deſtruction*; *they ſhall be* brought forth *to the day of wrath*. And more largely by the Son of *Sirach*, ch. xi. 16; xxxix, 25; xl, 9; *Errour and Darkneſs had their beginning together with Sinners, and evil ſhall wax old with them that glory therein: For the good, are good things created from the Beginning, ſo evil things for Sinners: Death and Bloodſhed, Strife and Sword, Calamities, Famine, Tribulation and the Scourge, Theſe things are created for the Wicked, and for their ſakes came the Flood.* Which *day of Wrath*, ſo far as it ſignifies the execution of *temporal* Judgments only, is thus excellently deſcribed in the book of *Wiſdom*, ch. v. ver. 20; *His ſevere wrath ſhall he ſharpen for a Sword, and the World ſhall fight with him againſt the unwiſe: Hailſtones full of wrath, ſhall he caſt as out of a ſtone-bow; and the water of the Sea ſhall rage againſt them; and the Floods ſhall cruelly drown them; Yea, a mighty Wind ſhall ſtand up againſt them, and like a ſtorm ſhall blow them away; thus iniquity ſhall lay waſte the whole Earth, and ill-dealing ſhall overthrow the thrones of the Mighty.*

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II. *Secondly*; It remains in the *ſecond* place, that we conſider the Words of the Text in their other and more proper rendering, wherein the *latter* part of the words anſwer more ſtrictly to the *former*; *The Lord has made all things ſuited to each other, yea even the wicked to the day of evil.* And in *this* Senſe, the general Doctrine they contain, is evident; that God has made every thing fitted for its proper End and Purpoſe, and wiſely contrived to anſwer its Intention. The only queſtion *here*, is, how God can be ſaid to have *fitted* the wicked to Deſtruction. But *this* Difficulty alſo will diſappear, if we conſider, that, according to the nature of the *Jewiſh* Language, *fitting the wicked to the day of evil*, ſignifies nothing more, than cauſing Wickedneſs and Puniſhment to be proportionable; that is, not that God *cauſes* Wickedneſs to be at all, but that he cauſes Puniſhment to be proportionable to the Wickedneſs that he finds in Men. And this is not only an Inſtance, but of all others the greateſt and moſt eminent Inſtance, of the Wiſdom and exact Adjuſtment of the Works of God. *Good is ſet againſt Evil, and Life againſt Death; ſo is the godly againſt the ſinner, and the ſinner againſt the godly: So look upon all the Works of the moſt High, and there are two and two one againſt another:* Eccluſ. xxxiii. 14; Or, as it is in the Text; *The Lord has made all things ſuitable to each other, yea even the wicked to the day of evil.* As God has made every thing throughout the World in exact Proportion, ſo particularly in this has he taken eſpecial Care, that ſooner or later, by direct Conſequence or by poſitive Inflict, by the natural Effect of the things themſelves or by the immediate Interpoſition of his own Authority, either in the preſent State or at leaſt in the Life to come, Wickedneſs and Miſery ſhall bear a juſt Proportion to each other. This Adjuſtment of men's Condition to their Deſerts, is the true Greatneſs and Glory of a Kingdom; and as illuſtrious a Manifeſtation of the *Juſtice and Majeſty* of God in his Government of the *Moral* World, as the Beauty and Harmony of the Parts of the *Material* World, and the wonderful Fitneſs of every thing therein to its proper End, is an undeniable Manifeſtation of his Power, and Wiſdom in the Works of *Nature*. In the Frame of *Nature*, God has *ordered* and diſpoſed *all things*, as the Wiſe man expreſſes it, *in meaſure, number, and Weight*. He *by his*

Wiſd. xi. 20.

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either

either *make themſelves Wings and fly away*, or are *kept by the owners thereof to their Hurt*: of *Envy*, that it *ſlayeth the ſilly one*, and conſumeth him as the *rottenneſs of the Bones*; of *Pride*, that it *goeth before deſtruction, and a haughty Spirit before a Fall*; of *Judas*'s betraying his Maſter to Death, that the guilt of it brought *him* to an untimely and unnatural Death, *that he might go to his own Place*; of the idolatrous Heathens who *changed the Truth of God into a Lie*, that by the practice of unnatural and diſhonourable Vices among themſelves, they *received in themſelves that recompence of their Errour which was meet*; Rom. i. 27. SERM. XXXII.

But *ſecondly*, beſides this natural Tendency of Things themſelves, God does moreover take care, by the poſitive interpoſition of his Power and Authority in the World, that every evil Work ſhall have its proper recompence in the day *of evil*. Moſt ſtrictly and exactly ſhall this be done at the great and final day of Accounts, *when God ſhall bring every Work into judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil*. But very frequently even in this *preſent* World, is the Sinner recompenſed according to his doings; and not unuſually in the very ſame manner, and by the ſame things that were the Inſtruments of his Sin. *He hath graven and digged up a pit, and is fallen himſelf into the deſtruction that he made for others; For his travail ſhall come upon his own head, and his Wickedneſs ſhall fall on his own pate*; Pſ. vii. 16. The Scripture affords us many Examples of this kind: Of *Adonibezek*, who ſuffered the ſame cruel Treatment, which he himſelf had formerly exerciſed upon others; ſo that he *was* forced to confeſs, *Judg.* i. 7; *As I have done, ſo God has requited me*. Of *Agag*, to whom *Samuel* declared, 1 *Sam.* xv. 33. *As thy Sword has made Women childleſs, ſo ſhall thy Mother be childleſs among Women*. Of *Joab*; to whom *the Lord returned his blood upon his own Head, who fell upon two Men more Righteous and better than he, and ſlew them with the Sword*; 1 Kings ii. 32. Of *Haman*, who fell by the ſame ignominious Death, which he had prepared for a Man more excellent than himſelf; *Eſth.* vii. 10. Of *David* himſelf, for his great Sin in the matter of *Uriah*; when upon account of the Murder he had committed, it was declared to him from God, that *the Sword* ſhould *not depart from his houſe for ever*; and upon account of his *Adultery*, that his *own Family* ſhould be permitted to be diſhonoured *publickly*, in Reproof of the Crime that he had committed in *ſecret*. *Laſtly*, of the whole Nation of the *Egyptian* Idolaters: concerning whom the Author of the Book of *Wiſdom* thus expreſſes himſelf, ch. xii. *ver.* 23; and xi. 16; and xv. 18; compared with xvi. 1; *Whereas men have lived diſſolutely and unrighteouſly thou haſt tormented them with their own abominations: They worſhipped Beaſts that are moſt hateful;——therefore by the like were they puniſhed worthily, and by the multitude of Beaſts tormented: For the fooliſh devices of their wickedneſs, wherewith being deceived, they worſhipped ſerpents void of Reaſon, and the vileſt of Beaſts; thou didſt ſend a multitude of unreaſonable Beaſts upon them for vengeance; That they might know that wherewithal a man ſinneth, by the ſame alſo ſhall he be puniſhed.*

The *Uſe* of what has been ſaid, is, *1ſt*, that we juſtify God, and give glory to him in all his proceedings; whoſe Pleaſure it is not, that any Man ſhould be wicked; but he puniſhes them *here*, that they *may* repent; and *hereafter*, if they repent *not*. There is nothing in the whole tenour of Scripture more ſollicitouſly provided againſt, than that Men ſhould not think God to be Author or Decreer of Sin. In numberleſs places he declares to Sinners, that their Deſtruction is wholly of themſelves, by their own Obſtinacy only, and that he hath no pleaſure at all in the Death of Him that dieth: And a very ſevere reproof is given to ſuch as ſpeak otherwiſe of God; *Jude* 14, 15; *Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thouſand of his Saints, to execute judgment upon All, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their* Hard Speeches *which ungodly Sinners have ſpoken againſt Him.*

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2*dly*, That if we would eſcape the *day of Evil*, we muſt avoid the *wickedneſs* to which it is annexed. There is nothing more unreaſonable, than for Men to live viciouſly, and yet hope to eſcape the neceſſary conſequences of their Vices. Happineſs in the Nature of *God*, is in conjunction with perfect Righteouſneſs and Holineſs: Happineſs in the Nature of *Things*, can ariſe only from the Participation of thoſe divine Perfections: Happineſs therefore in *Men*, cannot be in connexion with Impiety and Vice. And if it naturally were poſſible; yet it would not be *fit* for God to permit the juſt proportions of Things to be ſo diſordered: For it *becomes* the Almighty Governour of the Univerſe, and his Juſtice and Wiſdom are highly concerned therein, to *make every one thing anſwerable to another, even the wicked* and *the day of evil.*

SERMON

SERMON XXXIII.

Of a Future Judgment.

ACTS. xvii. 31.

Becauſe he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in Righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained.

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THERE is no where in the whole *New Teſtament* a more ſublime and affectionate Summary of the Chriſtian Doctrine, than in this Diſcourſe of St. *Paul* to the men of *Athens*. *Athens* was at that time the Seat of Learning in *Greece*, the Great Reſort of Philoſophers of all Sects, and of the ableſt and moſt accompliſhed men in every part of Literature. Whatever the Light of Nature and Reaſon, aſſiſted with all the Helps of acquired Learning, could poſſibly diſcover, concerning the *Nature of God* and of *true Religion*; might *naturally* have been expected to be met with *here*. *Here*, if in *Any* part of the World, it was reaſonable to imagine, might have been found *Numbers* of men, free from the Con-

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tagion of those gross Superstitions and absurd Idolatries, which had overspread the ignorant and unlearned World. But on the contrary, in *Fact*, it appears from This History of St. *Paul*, and from the agreeing Account which all *Other* Antient Writers give us of this matter; that This School of Reason and Philosophy, this eminent Seat of Learning, was itself as deeply overwhelmed and buried in Superstition and Idolatry, as any other part of the less Learned World. The *obvious Inference* from which Observation, is, the *Usefulness* and *Necessity* of *Revelation*. For how true soever it be, (as most true and certain it is,) that the Principles of true Religion are perfectly agreeable to Nature and Reason, and may even demonstrably be deduced from thence by irresistible Arguments; yet so it was, that Few or None of these most Learned Philosophers, either Themselves *saw and traced this Light* of Reason and Truth, or *dared to discover and recommend* it to Others. From whence it evidently appears, that those *Right Notions* concerning *God* and the *Natural Obligations of Religion*, which are Now so plain and obvious in *Reason*, that they are urged by Many as an Argument against the *Needfulness* of any *Revelation at all*; are themselves generally borrowed from the Light of *Revelation*, even by Those who use them as an argument *against* it. But This, *by the way*.

The Disposition of the City of *Athens*, at the time St. *Paul* travelled That way, being such as I have described; *his Spirit was stirred in him*; ver. 16; it filled him with great and just Indignation, to see so eminent a City *wholly given to Idolatry*. And because the Persons he was at This place to converse with were principally Philosophers, and Men of Reason and Argument; *here* therefore was a noble Field for him to display the whole Force and Power of his Eloquence. And what our Saviour said concerning the *Samaritan City* coming out to hear him; *Lift up your eyes, and look on the Fields, for they are white already to Harvest*; Joh. iv. 35; might now, in all Appearance, *much more* have been said concerning the Apostle's Auditory at *Athens*. To draw to him their Attention, and cause his Discourse to enter more effectually into their Minds, he makes an accidental Remark upon Somewhat he had observed in the place, to be the seeming Occasion of what he had to propose to them. *As I passed by*, says he, *and beheld your Devotions, I found an Altar with This Inscription, To the Unknown God*; ver. 23. This naturally suggested to him to mention, both the *Knowledge* they already in Some Measure had of the *True God*, and at the same Time the extreme *Ignorance* their Manner of Worship showed they were in, of his *True Nature and Attributes*. That God, *therefore*, says he, *whom ye Ignorantly Worship, Him declare I unto you*. And Thus, beginning at what they already professed to know, he deduces his Argument through what they could not but acknowledge, to a Conclusion necessarily inferring what they would gladly have denied. First he alledges to them, that *the God who made the World and all things therein, the Lord of Heaven and Earth*; ver. 24; must, (according to True Reason) be acknowledged to be One Omnipresent Being, who is not *far from every One of us, for in Him we live and move and have our Being*. That, consequently, all things being the Works of his Hands, the Light of Nature itself teaches us to discover him, and the Works of the Creation naturally lead Men to him: *He hath made of One Blood all Nations of Men*; (*ver.* 26.) *for to dwell on all the face of the Earth, and hath determined the Times before appointed, and the bounds of their Habitation: That they might seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him*. From This natural Notion of God, which the *Athenian* Philosophers could not deny, the Apostle immediately proceeds to urge them with this most obvious deduction, in reproof of their idolatrous Worship; that This Omnipresent God, who made and governs the Universe, *dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands, Neither is worshipped with mens Hands, as though he needed any thing; seeing he giveth to All, Life and Breath and all things*; ver. 25: And that He, whose

Offspring

Offspring We ourſelves are; whoſe Workmanſhip not only the *material World*, but even *rational and immortal Spirits* are; cannot Himſelf be *like unto Gold, or Silver, or Stone, graven by Art or Man's Device*; ver. 29. This being itſelf exceeding clear, and what the Philoſophers were very ſenſible of; yet the *great Ignorance* in which the generality of the World was involved, he tells them, would *extenuate* in ſome degree, in the Eyes of a merciful God, the Folly of the deluded Nations: *The Times of this ignorance, God winked at*; ver. 30. But then at the ſame Time, from this *general Ignorance*, which prevailed notwithſtanding the clearneſs of the Thing itſelf in point of true Reaſon, he argues very ſtrongly for the needfulneſs and credibility of a *Revelation: ver.* 30; *But now he commandeth all men every where to repent; Becauſe he hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the World in Righteouſneſs.* And from thence he lets himſelf into the Proof of the *Chriſtian* Revelation *in particular*: God *will judge the World by That man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he has raiſed him from the Dead.*

In diſcourſing upon which Subject, I ſhall lay before you ſome brief Obſervations, upon the *following Particulars* contained in the Words. *1ſt*, The *Proof* we have, that there *ſhall be* a *Judgment*: God *will judge the World*. *2dly*, The *Time*, when This *Judgment* ſhall be: *He hath appointed a Day, in the which he will judge the World*. *3dly*, The *Perſon*, by *whom* the World ſhall be judged: He will judge it *by That man, whom he hath ordained*. *4thly*, The *Perſons*, *who* ſhall be *called into Judgment*: It is the Whole *World*. And *Laſtly*, the *Manner* or *Method*, in which this Great Affair will be tranſacted: He will judge *in Righteouſneſs*.

I. *Firſt*; The *Proof* we have, that there *ſhall be* a *Judgment*, is very ſtrong and clear, both in the *Reaſon* of *Things*, and in the *Revelation* of *God*. *Revelation* here, does but *confirm* what *Reaſon* teaches; and *Reaſon* makes *credible* the *Revelation*. The Difference between Good and Evil, between Virtue and Vice, is (in the *Nature* of Things) eſſential, neceſſary, immutable, and eternal. And what our Saviour ſays in the Goſpel, with Relation to the unchangeable *Determinations* of *God*; is *in This caſe* equally true in the very *Nature* of the *Things* themſelves; *Heaven and Earth ſhall paſs away*, but *not a tittle of the Law ſhall* ever *fail*. This natural and eſſential Difference between Good and Evil, every *rational Mind* is as neceſſarily ſenſible of, as every *Eye* diſtinguiſhes between Light and Darkneſs: And upon This is founded That natural Conſcience, whoſe *gentle* Admonitions, and yet Admonitions that *will be* heard, are to every Man the perpetual *Still Voice* of God. Even *the Gentiles*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *by Nature, having not the Law, are a Law unto themſelves; which ſhow the work of the Law written in their Hearts, their Conſcience alſo bearing Witneſs, and their Thoughts the mean while accuſing or elſe excuſing one another*; Rom. ii. 14. Men *have* therefore, even by the *Light of Nature*, a *Rule* to walk by; They *ſee*, and *diſtinguiſh*, what is *Good* or *Evil*; They *chuſe freely*, and *determine* their own Actions; They *reflect* upon what they have done, with an unavoidable *Senſe* of having done *well* or *ill*: They are, conſequently, capable of *Accounting* for what they do; being worthy either of *Blame* or *Commendation*, either of *Puniſhment* or *Reward*. Wherefore if there be a God who governs the World, who gave Men theſe rational and moral Faculties, and who has himſelf any Real Concern about Good and Evil; (without which, he would not indeed be *Governour of the World*, that is, he would not be *God*, but mere *Fate* or *Nature*: If there be a *God*, I ſay, who *governs* the World,) it cannot but be *One* proper *Act* of his *Government*, to bring to Judgment ſuch Creatures as are capable of being judged, and to reward or puniſh them according to their Behaviour. Which ſince it is not done *here*, (as indeed the proper Seaſon of Judgment, is not till the Time of Tryal be accompliſhed;) it follows neceſſarily that it muſt

SERM. XXVIII. be done *hereafter*. This is the manifeſt Voice of *Nature* and *Reaſon*: And to *confirm* this Great Truth by the immediate *Authority of God*, to make it ſtill more *evident* even to the meaneſt Capacities, and to *inculcate* it with greater *Strength* and *Weight* upon Mankind, is the principal End and Deſign of *Revelation*. In This, All our Saviour's Diſcourſes, and thoſe of his Apoſtles, terminate; in aſſuring us, that *God will bring every Work into Judgment, with every Secret thing, whether it be good or evil.* That *to them who, by patient continuance in well doing, ſeek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality*, he will give *eternal Life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey Unrighteouſneſs, Indignation, and Wrath: Tribulation and Anguiſh upon every ſoul of man that doth Evil, of the Jew firſt, and alſo of the Gentile.*

II. The *Second* Particular obſervable in the Text, is the *Time when* this Judgment ſhall be: *He hath appointed* a Day, *in the which he will judge the World.* The word, *Day*, in this place, and in all other Texts of Scripture, where *the* Day *of Judgment* is ſpoken of; is not at all needful to be underſtood of that particular *Portion* or *Quantity* of Time, which we call *a Day*; But it ſignifies only, in general, a *determinate Time* or *Seaſon*, how *ſhort* or how *long* ſoever the *Continuance* or *Duration* of it may be. And God's having *Appointed* this Time, does not ſignify his declaring *when* it is to be, but only the certainty of his having decreed that it *ſhall* be. On the contrary the *particular Time when* the World ſhall be judged, is One of Thoſe Secrets, which, for the wiſeſt Reaſons, (that Men might *watch* and *be ready always*,) the *Father* has reſerved *in his own Power. Of that Day and Hour*, ſays our Lord, *knoweth no man, no not the Angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but my Father only*; Mar. xiii. 32; Matt. xxiv. 36. *This only* does the Scripture aſſure us, that *as a Snare ſhall it come on all them, that dwell on the face of the whole Earth.* That as, in the days before the *Flood*; and as, before the overthrow of *Sodom* and *Gomorrha*, Men were *eating* and *drinking*, and thought not of the Deſtruction 'till it came upon them; *ſo alſo ſhall the coming of the Son of man be.*

There were Some in the Apoſtles Times, who, by miſapplication of certain Prophecies relating to the Deſtruction of the *Jewiſh* State, thought the World was to end in That Age. But from our Saviour's own Prophecy, that *Jeruſalem* ſhould be *trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*; (which is plainly a long Seaſon:) And from the Apoſtle's exhortation, *Let no man deceive you by any means, by word or letter as that the day of Chriſt is at hand; for That day ſhall not come, except there come a falling away firſt, and That man of Sin be revealed*; From theſe Paſſages, I ſay, it is evident, that not the End of *the World*, but the Deſtruction only of *Judæa* was to be expected in That Age. Nevertheleſs, *whatever* be the Time, how *near* or how *far off* ſoever, when the World is to end; it makes no difference at all to any *particular perſon*; ſeeing *His* particular Concern in the Judgment of the Great Day, depends intirely on the State wherein *He himſelf* ſhall leave the World; which Time, he is ſure, cannot be *very far* diſtant from him.

III. The *Third* thing proper to be taken Notice of in the Text, is, *the Perſon* By *whom* the World ſhall be judged: God will judge it *By That man, whom he hath ordained.* The *Light of Nature* teaches us, that *God will judge the World*; and *Revelation* has declared to us, that He will judge it *By Chriſt.* The *Difference* of the *Perſon Judging*, makes not indeed any *Difference* in the *Rule* by which we ſhall be judged. But it is a *Signification* of God's *merciful Intentions* towards Mankind, that he has *Appointed* the *Same* Perſon to be our *Judge*, who *condeſcended* to take our Nature upon him, to be made ſubject to all our Weakneſſes and Infirmities, and to be tempted in all Things like as We are, Sin only excepted; Who therefore *can have compaſſion on the ignorant, and on them that are out*

of

of the Way, for that he himself also was compassed with Infirmity. And at the same Time on the other Hand, it is an *Aggravation* of the Ingratitude and of the Terrour of presumptuous and impenitent Sinners, to consider that the same merciful Saviour, who gave himself for them to have redeemed them from Death, and sent them so many gracious Invitations to Repentance, shall after all his Offers of Mercy have been despised, *come* Himself *with ten thousand of his Saints, to execute Judgment upon All:* That he *shall come in the glory of his Father, and All his Holy Angels with him*; and *shall sit on the Throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all Nations:* That *he shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God*; *Before whose face the Earth and the Heaven shall flee away, and there shall be found no place for them:* That he *shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel.* SERM. XXXIII.

IV. The *Fourth* Particular observable in the Text, is, the *Persons who* shall be *called into Judgment:* He will judge *the World*; that is, All Mankind from the Highest to the Lowest. *For he which is Lord over All, shall fear no man's Person, neither shall he stand in awe of any man's Greatness; for he hath made the small and great, and careth for all alike*; Wisd. vi. 7. By *Greatness* therefore shall no Man prevail, nor by *Smallness* shall any one be concealed. *Say not Thou,* (as it is excellently expressed in the Book of *Ecclesiasticus*; *Say not Thou,*) *I will hide myself from the Lord*; *Shall Any remember Me from above? I shall not be remembred among so many People*; *For what is my Soul among such an infinite number of creatures?* (*Say not this,* says he: For) *Behold, the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens, and the Deep, and the Earth, and all that therein is, shall be moved when He shall visit: The Mountains also, and Foundations of the Earth, shall be shaken with Trembling, when the Lord looketh upon them: No heart can think upon these things worthily, and Who is able to conceive his Ways?* ch. xvi. 17. In This judgment therefore (I say) no one whatsoever, shall upon Any account be *exempted*, or *concealed*. *Force* or *Power* shall avail nothing, and *Meanness* or *Littleness* will afford no Plea. *Riches* shall find no place for *Bribery*, and *Poverty and worldly Considerations* move no *Compassion*. *Fraud and Skill* will be able to make no *Evasions*, nor *Multitudes and Numbers* lessen the *Terrours* of That Solemnity. But the *Righteous* alone *shall be exalted in That day*, and shall appear with *joy unspeakable and full of Glory*. *Then* the Wicked *repenting, and groaning for anguish of Spirit, shall say within themselves,* (Wisd. v. 3.) *We Fools accounted his Life Madness, and his End to be without Honour*; *How is he numbred among the Children of God, and his Lot is among the Saints!—— What hath Pride profited us? or what good hath Riches with our Vaunting brought us? All those things are passed away like a Shadow, and as a Post that hasted by.* And *Rev.* vi. 14. *The Heaven departed as a Scroll when it is rolled together, and every Mountain and Island were moved out of their Places. And the Kings of the Earth, and the Great men, and the Rich men, and the chief Captains, and the Mighty men, and every Bondman, and every Freeman, hid themselves in the Dens, and in the Rocks of the Mountains: And said to the Mountains and Rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the Wrath of the Lamb:*

V. The *Fifth* and *Last* Thing needful to be remarked in the Text, is the *Manner* or *Method*, in which This Great Affair will be transacted: He will judge in *Righteousness*. That is: Every Man shall be rewarded, or punished, according to his *Deserts*; according to what he has done in the Flesh, whether it be Good or Evil. For the Judge of the whole Earth will do what is right, and *with Equity shall he judge the Nations.* And our Saviour himself Thus describes it, *Rev.* xxii. 12; *Behold, I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to give every man according as his Work shall be.* *Not* therefore according to *empty Notions* and *contentious Opinions*, which foolish Men earnestly dis-

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pute about: *Not* according to Mens *Faith* or *Knowledge*, if they be void of the Fruits of Righteouſneſs: *Not* according to Mens *Zeal* in particular *Parties* and *Factions*, or in the bare outward *Profeſſion* even of the true *Religion* itſelf: *Not* according to the *uncharitable judgment*, which raſh Men are apt to paſs one upon another: *Not* according to any *unconditionate Decree*, or *Fore-appointment* of *God*: But according as Men have lived in the Ways of *Piety*, or *Profaneneſs*; in *Sobriety*, or *Debauchery*; in the Practice of *Righteouſneſs*, *Goodneſs*, and *univerſal Charity*; or of *Injuſtice*, *Iniquity*, and *Unrighteouſneſs*; according to *This*, ſhall the final Sentence paſs.

Fatal therefore is the Miſtake of all thoſe, who expect to be judged by *Any Other* Meaſure. Who, without true Virtue, expect to be ſaved, by means of any Thing they can poſſibly do for *themſelves*, or that *any other perſons* can do for them. Who hope to obtain Salvation, either by any *unconditionate Favour and Decree of God*; when the Apoſtle expreſsly declares on the contrary, that God is *no Reſpecter of Perſons*, and that he hath *choſen* Men *to Salvation through Belief of the Truth, and Sanctification of the Spirit*. Or who rely on their *zealous external Profeſſion* of the *True Religion*; when even to thoſe who *taught in his Streets, and in his Name* had *caſt out Devils*, and *done many wonderful Works*, yet our Saviour replies, *I know you not whence ye are, Depart from me, all ye Workers of Iniquity*. Or who hope to be ſaved, by Virtue of *Any ſuperſtitious Commutations*; As the *Phariſees*, who under Pretence of contributing to the Service of the *Temple*, excuſed Men from relieving the Neceſſities even of their *Parents themſelves*; Matt. xv. 5. Nor is the Errour of *Thoſe men* at all leſs Fatal, who depend that they ſhall be ſaved by their *Faith*; if thereby they mean any thing elſe than That Obedience *of Faith*, as the Apoſtle ſtiles it, which is the *Practice of Righteouſneſs*. Or that they ſhall be ſaved by the *Merits of Chriſt*; if thereby they mean any thing elſe, than the *Terms of That Covenant* for the Acceptation of Repentance, which is the *Purchaſe* of the *Merits and Death of Chriſt*. Or that they ſhall be ſaved by *Grace*; if by That Term they mean any thing elſe than the *Goſpel itſelf*, even *That Grace of God which bringeth Salvation, by Teaching us that denying ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World, Looking for that Bleſſed Hope, and the glorious Appearing of the Great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*.

The *Application* of what has been ſaid, is,

1*ſt*; If Theſe things be ſo, and there *is* certainly a Judgment to come; Then let us *All* frequently and ſeriouſly conſider with ourſelves, as St. *Peter* admoniſhes, 2 *Pet.* iii. 11; *Seeing that all theſe things ſhall be diſſolved, what manner of Perſons ought we to be, in all holy Converſation and Godlineſs: Looking for and haſting unto the Coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire ſhall be diſſolved, and the elements ſhall melt with fervent Heat.*

2*dly*, Seeing *the Time* when this Judgment ſhall be, (or, which to *Us* is the ſame thing, *the Time* when *we ourſelves* ſhall depart out of This World,) is altogether *uncertain*; Let us therefore continually ſet before our Eyes that Advice of our Saviour, *Luke* xxi. 34; *Take heed to yourſelves leſt*-----*That day come upon you unawares; For as a ſnare ſhall it come on all them, that dwell on the face of the whole Earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to eſcape all theſe things that ſhall come to paſs, and to ſtand before the Son of Man.* And if any *Damage* at any time befal us, for the ſake of a good Conſcience; let us ſay with That brave Perſon, in 2 *Maccab.* vii. 11. *Theſe I had from Heaven, and for his Laws I deſpiſe them, and from him I hope to receive them again.* And when we ſee Great Wickedneſs perhaps proſper for a time, let us remember the Admonition of *Solomon*, Prov. xxiii. 17; *Let not thine Heart envy Sinners, but be thou in the Fear of the Lord all the day long; For ſurely there is an End, and thine expectation ſhall not be cut off.*

3*dly* and *laſtly*; If the *Manner* and *Method* of this final judgment, ſhall be *in righteouſneſs*, according to every Man's *work* that he has done, whether it be *good* or *evil*: Then let us continually be aware, that all *Other* expectations whatſoever, are mere Deceits. And let us always remember thoſe remarkable words, with which our Saviour concludes his Sermon on the Mount: *Whoſoever heareth theſe ſayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him unto a wiſe man, which built his houſe upon a Rock: And the rain deſcended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that houſe; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock: And every one that heareth theſe ſayings of mine, and doth them not, ſhall be likened unto a fooliſh man, which built his houſe upon the ſand: and the rain deſcended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that houſe: and it fell, and great was the fall of it.*

SERMON XXXIV.

That every Man ſhall finally receive according to his Works.

GAL. vi. 7.

Be not deceived, God is not mocked: For whatſoever a man ſoweth, That ſhall he alſo reap.

SERM. XXXIV.

IN theſe Words we may obſerve, 1*ſt*, the general and fundamental Doctrine of true Religion; that every Man ſhall finally receive of God, according to what he has done: *Whatſoever a man ſoweth that ſhall he alſo reap.* 2*dly*, A Declaration, that every Opinion or Practice, that ſubverts This Great and Fundamental Doctrine; is, in reality and in true conſequence, a *Mocking of God*; *God is not mocked*; *For whatſoever a man ſoweth, That ſhall he alſo reap.* 3*dly*; An Admonition or Warning, that, how pernicious ſoever, and how manifeſtly ſoever pernicious, every ſuch Opinion or Practice is; yet many deceitful Conſiderations there are, which (without due Care) will in event draw Men into ſo great a Deſtruction: *Be not deceived, God is not mocked.*

I. *Firſt*; Here is laid down the General and Fundamental Doctrine of True Religion; that every man ſhall finally receive of God, according to what he has done:

done: *Whatſoever a man ſoweth, That ſhall he alſo reap.* This Maxim, is the Reaſon and End of All *Laws*, the Maintenance and Support of all *Government*, the Foundation and Ground-work of all *Religion.* In *Other* matters therefore, which are of *leſs* importance; in opinions of *particular* and more *minute* conſideration; which depend on a variety of Circumſtances, and on the Truth of Many collateral Notions which muſt carefully be compared together: In *Theſe* there will always be room for difference of Apprehenſions, and many *Errours* poſſibly may be of ſmall Conſequence. But *This* Doctrine, of Rewards and Puniſhments finally proportionable to mens Behaviour; is the *Root* of Virtue, and the *vital Principle* of Religion. It is a Truth of the *ſame Certainty* and of the *ſame Importance*, with the Acknowledgment of the very *Being* of God, and of the natural and eſſential Difference between Good and Evil. For which reaſon the Apoſtle in the Text, by a very lively and expreſſive figure, repreſents it under the ſimilitude of things which have *in Nature* the moſt immediate and neceſſary Connexion: *Whatſoever a man ſoweth*; *That ſhall he alſo reap.* And what our Saviour alledged upon *another* occaſion, to expreſs the reaſonableneſs of judging concerning mens *Hearts* from their *Actions*; may no leſs properly be applied here, as a Rule for every man to judge from his *preſent Actions* concerning his own *Future State*; *Men do not gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thiſtles.* As the *Fruit* is always of the *ſame kind*, with the *Stock* that bears it; and the *Grain reaped*, is neceſſarily of the ſame ſort with the *Seed* that was *ſown*: So mens final State of *Happineſs* or *Miſery*, ſhall be the proper and correſpondent Effect of their *preſent Actions. He that ſoweth to his fleſh*, (as the Apoſtle expreſſes it in the words following my Text,) *ſhall of the fleſh reap corruption: But he that ſoweth to the Spirit, ſhall of the Spirit reap Life everlaſting.* In the *preſent* time, we frequently ſee This *in ſome degree* verified, in what we uſually call the *Natural Courſe and Conſequences of Things.* In the *Future State* after what manner the Effects and Operations of *Nature* will proceed, we are Now altogether ignorant: And therefore we repreſent to ourſelves, very juſtly and with the greateſt Reaſon, every Circumſtance of *That* State, as the immediate Effect of *God's final Judgment*, and the direct execution of the irreverſible Sentence. Yet, were we able to diſcern, or had God thought fit to diſcover to us, the *Particulars* of This Whole Proceeding; the *Difference* perhaps of God's ſeveral Ways and Methods of Acting, would not appear ſo Great to us, as we are apt to imagine. The *Certainty* at leaſt of the *Connexion*, and the *proper correſpondency* of the *Events*, would be altogether as *conſpicuous*, and appear as far removed from any degree of *arbitrary Uncertainty*, in all thoſe things which we aſcribe to the *immediate Judgment of God*; as in any of thoſe which we Now look upon, as ariſing from the *Natural Conſequences and Connexion of Things.* For, What are the Natural *Conſequences and Connexion of Things*, but the *Reſult* of *That Order and Diſpoſition* of Things, which *God originally eſtabliſhed* in the Creation? And the very *ſame Power*, which eſtabliſhed and preſerves this Order of Nature, has *appointed* likwiſe the *Connexion of Conſequences* in the Progreſs of the Moral State of the World. However *different* therefore the *Manner* and *Method* of God's operations may be, in theſe two *different* Governments of ſuch *very different* kinds of Subjects; yet the *operation* may, in *Each*, be *equally regular in its kind*; And the proper *Effect* or *Event*, correſponding to the antecedent Cauſe, whether in the *Natural* or *Moral* World, may be alike *Certain* and *invariable* in Both. When, in the Courſe of *Nature*, we ſee Grain, ſown in the Earth, produce regularly and uniformly, after certain ſtated Periods of Time, Fruit of the ſame kind with That which was ſown; we are very apt to let the Wonder ſlip out of our Minds, and loſe the whole Force of its impreſſion, merely by affixing to it a *word* of *No* ſignification, and calling it by the Name of *Natural*: Whereas, in Truth, inanimate *Nature* is nothing but an *empty Sound*; Unintelligent *Agents* and *Powers*, (as we improperly call them,) are nothing but *mere Inſtruments*; and the Whole Effect is *really* the *Operation* of *Him*, who is the *Author and God of Nature.* By the *Diſpoſition* and *Appointment* of the *Same* Author and Ruler of the Univerſe, the *Moral*

SERM. XXXIV. Conſequences and Connexions of Things do, in *Their proper manner*, and at *Their proper Seaſons*, take place likewiſe in the World. And could our Faculties extend themſelves, to take in at One View thoſe *larger Periods* of the Divine Diſpenſations, on which depends the Harmony and Beauty of the *Moral* World; in like manner as our experience enables us to contemplate the *Yearly* Products of *Nature*: We ſhould *Then* probably be no more ſtruck with Wonder, at the ſeeming *Forbearing* of Providence to interpoſe *at preſent* in the ordering of the *Moral* State of the World; than we are *Now* ſurprized, in the *regular courſe of Nature*, to ſee Grain lie as it were dead in the Earth in Winter, and ſeemingly diſſolving into corruption; and yet, without Fail, at the Return of its proper Seaſon, bringing forth the certain particular Fruit, of which it was the Seed. The Apoſtle's Similitude therefore in the Text, not only *in general* is a *Certain and Infallible Truth*, but very probably may be alſo a Truth which has *in itſelf* a more *immediate and neceſſary connexion*, than men are uſually ſenſible of. It is not only true, that God has *actually* ſet before men ſuch and ſuch Promiſes and Threatnings; but probably it will be found true alſo, at the final iſſue and event of Things, that he has appointed by as *cloſe and regular a Connexion*, in *Morals* as in *Naturals*, that *whatſoever a man ſoweth, That ſhall he alſo reap.*

In the *Natural and Material* World, the *More Obſervations* men make, and the *greater Accuracy* they arrive at, and the *Longer Periods of Time* they are able to take in; the *more clearly and diſtinctly* do they diſcern, that in That innumerable Variety of the Works of God, all things conſpire uniformly, with the moſt exquiſite exactneſs, to produce (and That ſometimes out of the Greateſt ſeeming Confuſions) the propereſt and moſt regular Effects. The *Moral* World, is of infinitely greater Importance: It is That, for the *ſake of which* the *material World* was created; and *without which*, this beautiful and ſtupendous Fabrick of the *inanimate* Univerſe is Nothing. It cannot be doubted then by Any reaſonable perſon, but that the Same Wiſdom, which, in the *unintelligent Works of Nature*, has ſhown forth itſelf in the contrivance of ſuch inexpreſſible Aptneſſes and Proportions of Things; will *much more* in the Government of *Rational Beings*, (which are in a far *nobler* and *more proper* Senſe the Subjects of God's Power and Kingdom,) ſhow forth itſelf finally, in making every Event, through a wonderful variety of different Diſpenſations, terminate at length in moſt evident and illuſtrious Manifeſtations of perfect Juſtice, Goodneſs and Truth.

However therefore *Melancholy pious* perſons, patiently perſiſting in the Practice of their Duty, may, when they obſerve how Providence in *the preſent Time* ſuffers all things ſeemingly to go alike to all, be hereby ſometimes tempted almoſt to deſpond; yet in reality their Reward is laid up for them with God *much more certainly*, than Grain which in the Winter ſeems to lie dead in the Earth wherein it was ſown, may yet be depended upon to bring forth Fruit in its Seaſon. The *Pſalmiſt* expreſſes This very emphatically, *Pſ.* xxvi. 6; *They that ſow in Tears, ſhall reap in joy: He that now goeth on his way weeping, and beareth forth good ſeed, ſhall doubtleſs come again with joy, and bring his Sheaves with him.* The *Figure* is the ſame with that in the Text: And the *literal meaning* of it is well expreſſed by the Author of the Book of *Wiſdom*, ch. iii. 4; and v. 15; The righteous, *though they be puniſhed in the Sight of Men, yet is their Hope full of Immortality*; For *their Reward is with the Lord, and the Care of them is with the moſt High.* And by the *Apoſtle* himſelf, *Rom.* ii. 7; *To Them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, ſeek for glory and honour and Immortality*; to Them God will give *eternal Life.* And therefore he exhorts, *Heb.* x. 35; *Caſt not away therefore your Confidence, which hath great Recompence of Reward. For ye have need of Patience, that, after ye have done the Will of God, ye might receive the Promiſe. For yet a little while, and he that ſhall come, will come, and will not tarry.* And St. *James* in like manner, ch. v. 7; *Be patient therefore, Brethren, unto the Coming of the Lord. Behold, the Husbandman waiteth for the precious Fruit of the Earth, and hath long Patience for it, until he receive*

receive the early and latter Rain. Be ye also Patient; stablish your Hearts; For the Coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

On the contrary; However *Presumptuous and Careless* persons may deceive themselves with numberless vain Imaginations, expecting to *reap where they have not sown, and to gather where they have not strawed*; yet, as certainly as the *Nature of Things* is unvaried, and the *Perfections of God* unchangeable; the final issue of things in the *future State* will be *universally*, what *Job* observes it to be *sometimes* even in the *present* State; ch. iv. 8; *I have seen, they that plow iniquity and sow wickedness, reap the same: By the Blast of God they perish, and by the Breath of his Nostrils they are consumed.*

This therefore is the *First Particular*, observable in the Text: The Apostle here lays it down as the General and Fundamental Doctrine of True Religion, that every man shall finally receive of God, according to what he has done; *Whatsoever a man soweth, That shall he also reap.*

II. *Secondly*; Here is a Declaration, that every Opinion or Practice, that subverts This Great and Fundamental Doctrine; is, in reality and in true Consequence, a *Mocking* of God: *God is not mocked*; *For whatsoever a man soweth, That shall he also reap.* The word, *mock*, [which in the *New Testament* is *in the Original* expressed by two or three *synonymous* Terms;] in its *literal* and most proper Sense; signifies, *Deceiving* any person, *deluding* him, or *disappointing* his *Expectation.* Thus *Matt.* ii. 16; when *Herod* had ordered the Wise men to bring him word where Jesus was; and, by their returning privately into their own country another way, found himself disappointed of his expectation; the Text expresses it, that he *saw he was* Mocked *of the Wise men.* At *other times*, it signifies *affronting* or *abusing* any person by *open violence.* Thus *Matt.* xx. 18; *The Son of man shall be betrayed unto the Chief Priests and Scribes; and they shall——deliver him to the Gentiles, to* Mock *and to scourge and to crucify him.* And *sometimes* it signifies *pretending Obedience and Respect*, by way of *Derision*, in a *scornful*, *insulting*, and *despiteful* manner. Thus *Matt.* xxvii. 29; *When they had platted a crown of Thorns, they put it upon his Head, and a reed in his right hand* for a Scepter; *and they bowed the knee before him, and* mocked *him, saying, Hail King of the Jews.*

In the *literal* and *proper* Sense of the phrase, it is *impossible in the nature of Things*, that *God* should in *any* of these ways be *mocked.* But *figuratively, consequentially*, and in *true reality of Guilt and Folly*, All Wicked men, who set themselves to oppose God's Kingdom of Righteousness; who, without Repentance, Amendment, and Obedience to God's Commands, expect to escape, and teach Others that They may escape, his Righteous Judgment; are, in the Apostle's estimation, *Mockers* of God. And the Grounds or Reasons, upon which they are *justly* so esteemed, are very evident. For

1*st*, Such persons, as far as in *Them* lies, *confound* the necessary Reasons and Proportions of Things, and endeavour to *take away* the eternal and unchangeable Differences of Good and Evil: which are the Original Order and Rule of God's Creation, and the very *Foundation* of his Government over the Universe. For, *what* is Government, but the preserving of the Order and Reason of *Things*, and suiting them to the Capacities and Qualifications of *Persons?* To endeavour therefore, either in *Doctrine* or in *Practice*, to *set aside* or to *elude* this great and essential *Distinction* of Things, without which the *Government* and even the *very Being* of God is of no Consequence: What is This, but, in the Highest degree, *mocking* of God, and taking away the *very Notion* of a Supreme Lord and Governour of the Universe? What is it else, but mens taking upon themselves to be wiser than God; and presuming that the Consequences of things *ought not* to be what they *are*, or that they *will not be* what he has declared they *shall be?* With regard to the Fabrick and Constitution of the *Material* World, there have in All Ages been Some Vain Philosophers, who through Ignorance, and Want of understanding the true Reasons and Uses of things, have been so foolish as to think they could find *Some Particulars Faulty* in the Operations of *Nature*, and that they might *more conveniently* have been

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diſpoſed in ſome *Other* method. The *Changes* theſe men would make in the Frame of the World, are *always* ſuch, as would by Some *Other* Conſequences, which *Their* ſhort-ſighted Preſumptuouſneſs is not at all aware of, introduce Confuſion and Diſorder into the *Whole*. In the *moral* Order of things, the caſe is exactly the ſame. Could wicked and debauched men, make *Evil* to be *Good, and Good Evil*; Could they (in the Prophet's expreſſion) make *Darkneſs* to be *Light, and Light Darkneſs*; *Bitter* to be *Sweet, and Sweet Bitter:* Could they reverſe the eternal Laws of Nature, and the Eſtabliſhment of the righteous Judgments of God: Could they make *Grapes* to be *gathered of Thorns, and Figs of Thiſtles*; and that They who *ſow Unrighteouſneſs* here, ſhould *reap Happineſs* hereafter: What would the *Conſequence of This* be, but that, for *Their* ſakes, the *Nature of Things* and the *Conſtitution of the Kingdom of God* ſhould be deſtroyed? *Vain* therefore is *the Flattery* wherewith unrighteous men *deceive Themſelves*, and *extreme* the *Preſumption* wherewith they *mock God*; when they who *cannot make one Hair white or black*, or *add one Cubit to their Stature*, imagine that their ſtate of Happineſs or Miſery ſhall not finally be determined according to that *eternal Reaſon of Things*, concerning which it may with the moſt certain Truth be affirmed, that *Heaven and Earth ſhall paſs away*, but *not one Tittle of that Law ſhall fail.*

2*dly*, The endeavouring, by *Any Deceit* whatſoever, to elude and ſet aſide this Great and Fundamental Rule; that every man ſhall finally receive of God, according to what he has done, whether it be good or whether it be evil; that *whatſoever a man ſoweth, That ſhall he alſo reap:* I ſay, the endeavouring, by *Any Deceit*, to elude and ſet aſide this great and fundamental Doctrine of true Religion; is really, and in true eſtimation of things, a *Mocking of God*; Not only becauſe it is (as I have ſhown) a Confounding of the *eſſential and unchangeable Differences of Good and Evil*; the neceſſary Reaſons, Proportions, and Conſequences of *Things*; which are the original Order and Rule of God's Creation, and the very *Foundation* of his Government over the Univerſe: But alſo *further*, becauſe it is an Entertaining of *very diſhonourable* and *very injurious* Apprehenſions, concerning the *Perfections and Attributes* of *God himſelf*. I ſpeak not now of *Atheiſtical* perſons, of ſuch as directly *deny* either the *Being* or the *Providence* of God; But of ſuch as either careleſsly or preſumptuouſly *deceive* Themſelves or Others, by imagining that God has not ſo great a Concern about Moral Good and Evil, but that they may by ſome means or other eſcape his final Wrath, without a life of Virtue and True Holineſs. This, I ſay, is really and in effect taking away his Moral Perfections, and entertaining very diſhonourable and very injurious Apprehenſions concerning the Nature and Attributes of God. It is diveſting him of thoſe Perfections, by which he is (as our Saviour emphatically ſtiles him) *The Great King*, the Supreme Governour of the *rational* and *moral* as well as of the natural World. And as the greateſt Affront that can be offered to the Majeſty of any Wiſe and Juſt *Prince* here upon *Earth*, is to ſuppoſe that his Authority will not be principally employed in promoting the Great Ends and Deſigns of his Government, and the Support and Security of his own Laws; ſo the Attempts of wicked men to elude the Great Ends of the *Divine* Government, by ſubſtituting any thing elſe whatſoever in the place of Virtue and true Righteouſneſs, in the place of Temperance, Equity, Charity and Truth; is, in the Apoſtle's eſteem, a *mocking* of God: It is *ſuch* a Mockery of him, as really tends more to hurt and efface in mens minds the true Notion of God, and to hinder the efficacy of Virtue, and Goodneſs in the World, than queſtioning even the very *Being* of a Supreme Governour at all. *Pſ.* x. 12; xciv. 7; *The Ungodly has ſaid in his Heart, God has forgotten; he hideth away his Face, and he will never ſee it. They ſay, Tuſh, the Lord ſhall not ſee; neither ſhall the God of Jacob regard it.*

3*dly*, As ſuch perſons are, in true eſtimation of things, *Mockers* of God, upon account of their *Confounding* thoſe *eſſential Differences* of *Good and Evil*, which are the *Foundation* of God's Government over Rational Creatures; and upon

upon account of their entertaining *diſhonourable* and *very injurious* Apprehenſi- SERM.
ons concerning the *Perfections and Attributes* of *God Himſelf*: So they are *ſtill* XXXIV.
further guilty of the ſame charge, in perverting the plain *Revelation* of Chriſt, and overthrowing the *whole Deſign* of his Religion. The Great Doctrine *our Lord* came to preach, is This: *Matt.* xvi. 27; *The Son of man ſhall come in the glory of his Father, with his Angels; and then he ſhall reward every man according to his Works.* Again: *Rev.* xxii. 12; *Behold I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to give every man according as his Work ſhall be.* And the *Sum* of what *his Apoſtles* taught, amounts always to the ſame. *We muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to That he has done, whether it be good or bad:* 2 Cor. v. 10. Whoſoever attempts to elude theſe plain Declarations, by imagining *any other Rule whatſoever*, whereby men ſhall be judged; (and ſaying, as the Serpent did to the woman, *Gen.* iii. 4; *Ye ſhall not ſurely dye*;) does in reality make a *Mockery* of *Religion*; or, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it in the Text, *Mocks God* and *Deceives himſelf: Be not deceived, God is not mocked; For whatſoever a man ſoweth, That ſhall he alſo reap.*

III. The *Third* and *Laſt* Particular I obſerved in the words, is the *Admonition* or *Caution* the Apoſtle here gives, that, how pernicious ſoever, and how manifeſtly ſoever pernicious, every opinion or practice is, which miſleads men from this One Great and Fundamental Rule; yet *Many* deceitful Conſiderations there are, which (without due Care) will in event draw men into ſo great a Deſtruction: *Be not deceived, God is not mocked.* But the explication of This, muſt be referred to a following Opportunity.

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That every Man ſhall finally receive according to his Works

GAL. vi. 7.

Be not deceived, God is not mocked: For whatſoever a man ſoweth, That ſhall he alſo reap.

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IN a foregoing Diſcourſe upon theſe words, I obſerved that herein is contained, 1*ſt*, the General and Fundamental Doctrine of true Religion; that every man ſhall finally receive of God, according to what he has done; *Whatſoever a man ſoweth, That ſhall he alſo reap.* 2*dly*, A Declaration, that every Opinion or Practice, that ſubverts this Great and Fundamental Doctrine; is, in reality and in true conſequence, a *Mocking of God: God is not mocked, for Whatſoever a man ſoweth, That ſhall he alſo reap.* 3*dly*, An Admonition or Warning, that, how pernicious ſoever, and how manifeſtly ſoever pernicious, every ſuch Opinion or Practice is; yet many deceitful Conſiderations there are, which (without due Care) will in event draw men into ſo great a Deſtruction: *Be not deceived, God is not mocked.* The *Two former* of theſe Particulars, I have already diſcourſed upon: And ſhall, at This Time, proceed to the *Third* and *Laſt* of them; namely, the *Many deceitful* Conſiderations there are, which (without due Care) will be apt to draw

draw men into the Deſtruction the Apoſtle here admoniſhes us to avoid: *Be not deceived.* SERM. XXXV.

The *Doctrine* itſelf; that every man ſhall finally receive of God, according to what he has done, whether it be good, or whether it be evil; that, *whatſoever a man ſoweth, That ſhall he alſo reap*; is undeniably *proved* by all the *Principles* of *Reaſon*, and expreſsly *confirmed* by all the *Notices* of *Revelation*. Yet ſo manifold and various are the *Deluſions* of Sin, and ſuch a Miſt of Darkneſs do the Paſſions and Appetites of men continually caſt before their Eyes; that the Apoſtle thought it neceſſary to add, with great Affection and Earneſtneſs, the Caution in the Text; and to repeat it frequently elſewhere, upon the like occaſion; *Be not deceived.* Thus, 1 *Cor.* iii. 17, 18; *Let no man* deceive *himſelf*: *If any man defile the Temple of God, which Temple Ye are*; that is, if any Chriſtian lives a vicious and debauched Life; *him ſhall God deſtroy.* And ch. vi. 9; *Know ye not, that the Unrighteous ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not* deceived: *Neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Effeminate, nor Abuſers of themſelves with Mankind, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners, ſhall inherit the Kingdom of God.* In like manner, *Eph.* v. 5; *Ye know that no Whoremonger, nor unclean perſon, has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Chriſt and of God: Let no man* deceive *you with vain words*; *for, becauſe of Theſe things cometh the Wrath of God upon the children of Diſobedience*; or, as we read in the margin, *upon the children of Unbelief.* i. e. Even upon *the Heathen World*, it is for their *unrighteous* and *debauched* Practices, contrary to the Light of Nature and to the eternal Laws of Truth and Reaſon, that the Wrath of God is poured down upon them. Again, *Heb.* iii. 12; *Take heed, brethren,——leſt any of you be hardened through the* Deceitfulneſs *of Sin.* And St. *John* in his firſt Epiſtle, ch. iii. 7; *Little children*, ſays he, *let no man* deceive *you*; *He that Doth Righteouſneſs, is righteous.* Theſe *repeated Cautions* and *Admonitions* of the Apoſtle, were intended to *warn* us, that there are *Many Deceitful* Conſiderations, which (without due Care) will be apt to hide from mens eyes the bright and clear Light even of this *evident Propoſition* and *great Foundation of Religion*, that every man ſhall finally receive of God, according to what he has done, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

What the principal of theſe *Deluſions* are in *particular*, is what I have now propoſed to conſider.

And here, That which firſt and moſt obviouſly offers itſelf, in our View of Mankind; is the Deceit men put upon themſelves by a general *Careleſneſs* and *Inattention.* They purſue the Ends of Ambition and Covetouſneſs; they labour continually to gratify their Paſſions, and Appetites; and conſider not at all, that the moſt High regardeth, and that for all theſe things God will bring them into Judgment. They ſee that all things continue as they were from the beginning of the Creation, and go on from generation to generation in one ſettled courſe; wherein it fares very much alike, with the righteous and the wicked; *with Him that ſacrifices*, and *with Him that ſacrifices not.* And This draws them on careleſsly in the ways of Sin; as if That which *has* been, is That which *ſhall* be; and things would never be otherwiſe than they Now are. The *Folly* of *This Deluſion*, lies in *This*; that they conſider not, that *One day is with God as a thouſand years, and a thouſand years as one day.* They conſider not that there is *a Time for all things*; that God has appointed for every thing its proper Seaſon; that *he has made all things* ſuitable, each to his correſpondent, *yea, even the wicked for the day of Evil.* The *Deceit* therefore *Theſe men* put upon themſelves, is exactly the ſame, as if any one ſhould imagine, that becauſe during the *Winter* All Seeds lie equally buried and as it were dead in the Earth, therefore in the *Spring* there would be no difference of their produce, nor of their Fruit in *Harveſt.* And This is indeed, a ſort of *Infidelity*: It is what the Apoſtle calls, an *evil heart of Unbelief*: It is a mixture of *Unbelief* and *Careleſneſs*, *various* in its *Degrees*, and of *ſpreading influence* in its *Extent.* It is This, to which is principally owing That State of the World, which our Saviour deſcribes, *Matt.* xxiv. 38; *As in the days that were before the Flood, they were*

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eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entred into the Ark; and knew not until the Flood came, and took them all away: ſo ſhall alſo the coming of the Son of man be.

But beſides this *general Careleſneſs*, mixt with *different degrees* of *Unbelief*; innumerable are the *Deceits* wherewith thoſe who *ſeem not* to themſelves to make *Any Doubt* of the Being and Government of God, do yet continually make ſhift to *delude* themſelves.

Some, judge of *God* by *Themſelves*; not according to the *Reaſon* of *Things*, but by their *own Diſpoſition* and *Temper*. And becauſe *they Themſelves* are not apt to be diſpleaſed, unleſs at things *directly injurious* to *Themſelves*; therefore they flatter themſelves that *God*, who can no way be *injured* by the Sins of men, will not be ſevere in puniſhing them; and particularly, that his Anger will not be ſo highly provoked by Sins of *Debauchery* or *Injuſtice*, as by *Irreligion* or *Profaneneſs*. In which matter they *deceive* themſelves for want of conſidering, that *God* is not a *Party*, but the *Judge* and *Governour* of the Univerſe; who puniſhes *Wickedneſs*, not that *He himſelf* ſuffers any thing by it, but as being *repugnant* to the *Nature* and *Reaſon* of *things*, to the eternal *Laws* of His righteous *Government*, to the *Welfare* and *Happineſs* of the *whole Creation*.

Others there are, who *deceive* themſelves by imagining, that God is pleaſed or diſpleaſed with *little* things, inſtead of judging of men according to the whole Courſe and Tenour of a *virtuous* and *vicious* life. And hence, though they are defective in any *Great Point* of Moral Virtue, or indulge themſelves in the *Habit* of any plain Vice, of Intemperance or Debauchery, of Fraud, Diſhoneſty, or Unrighteouſneſs; yet they hope to appeaſe God with ſome external Forms, with ſome empty and ineffectual Reſolutions, with ſome extraordinary Solemnities of Worſhip at certain Times and Seaſons, with a Zeal for ſome particular Notions or Opinions; with things which ought not indeed to be *left undone*, but which can by no means make Any amends for the Neglect of the *weightier* matters of the Law, *Juſtice*, *Mercy*, *and Faithfulneſs*. And This *Deceit* ariſes, from having falſe and unworthy Notions of *God*; from ſuppoſing him to have a *greater Concern* about *temporary*, *changeable*, and *merely poſitive* Inſtitutions, than about thoſe *Great and Eternal Laws*, in which eſſentially conſiſts his everlaſting *Kingdom* of *Righteouſneſs*, and the *Happineſs* of the *whole Creation*.

Another ſort of men there are, who ſeem to *content themſelves* with a looſe and general expectation, that *They* ſhall fare *upon the whole* as well as *Others*: and that the *Multitude* of thoſe who live in the ſame ſenſual way with themſelves, cannot be *all of them* in a ſtate liable to God's *ſevere diſpleaſure*. They *hope* therefore, that the *Debaucheries* they are guilty of, will be put to the account of *Natural Infirmities*, and excuſed as the *Weakneſſes* of *Humane Nature in general*. And *Here* they *deceive* themſelves by *not conſidering*, that the very *End and Deſign* of Chriſt's Religion, was, *that he might deliver us from this preſent evil world*, and purchaſe to himſelf *a* Peculiar *people zealous of good works*: That we might not *be conformed to This world, but transformed by the renewing of our Mind: That we might prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect Will of God*. They conſider not, that, for *This very Reaſon*, we are commanded, *not to follow a Multitude to do Evil*; not to follow the *cuſtomary*, and perhaps *faſhionable Vices*, of a degenerate and corrupt World; but on the contrary to *ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait Gate*, and to live *worthy of God who has called us unto his Kingdom and Glory*. They conſider not, when they comfort themſelves in the *Multitude* of Tranſgreſſors, that there are many *Thouſands in Iſrael*, who *They* know not of, *which never bowed the Knee to Baal*. And if there were *not*; yet God, who Made and can Deſtroy all with a Word, and who is able *even out of theſe Stones to raiſe up Children unto Abraham*; he, I ſay, *hath no Need of the ſinful man*; and has declared, that *though hand join in hand*, yet *the wicked ſhall not be unpuniſhed*: Prov. xi. 21.

Another Deluſion, by which wicked men ſometimes impoſe upon themſelves, is their obſerving the *Great Faults*, of which Some very Eminent and Extra-

ordinary

ordinary Perſons are in Scripture recorded to have been guilty. But they conſider not at the ſame time, the *Virtues and Excellencies* of the ſame perſons in the general courſe of their Lives; the *ſevere Puniſhment* God was pleaſed to inflict upon them, for their particular Offences; and above all, the *Greatneſs and Exemplarineſs* of their *Repentance and Amendment*. The *Penitential* Pſalms of *David*, are laſting Evidences upon Record, of the Deepneſs of his *Repentance and Humiliation*: And the ſevere Temporal *Puniſhments* God was pleaſed to inflict upon him notwithſtanding, are ſufficient Warnings to prevent the Example of his Faults from being an Encouragement to Sin. *Moſes* tranſgreſſed againſt God, in *One* raſh Action in the Wilderneſs: And God ſaid unto him, *Deut.* xxxii. 49; *Get thee up into This Mountain,—and die in the Mount,—as Aaron thy Brother died—; Becauſe ye treſpaſſed againſt me among the children of Iſrael—in the wilderneſs of Zin, and ſanctified me not in the midſt of the children of Iſrael.* In like manner, King *Hezekiah*; of whom the Scripture ſays, that *he did that which was Right in the Sight of the Lord,—ſo that after him was none like him among all the Kings of Judah, nor any that were before him*; yet, becauſe in *One* remarkable Inſtance *his heart was liſted up* with Pride, *therefore there was Wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jeruſalem*, 2 Chr. xxxii. 25. Theſe things (as the Apoſtle St. *Paul* obſerves) happened unto *Them of Old* for *Examples*, and *they are written for Our Admonition, upon whom the Ends of the World are come.* To the *intent that We*, (far from being incouraged by *Their* Offences, to venture upon the like Tranſgreſſions;) might on the contrary learn from *Their* Puniſhment, that God will not be *mocked*; and might take warning in Time to *judge ourſelves*, ſo as not to be finally *judged of the Lord*.

SERM. XXXV. 2 Kings viii. 3. 5.

There are ſtill *Others*, who *ſpeak peace to themſelves* in a *vicious* courſe of life; upon the mere *general* Notion of the *Mercy* and *Patience* and *Goodneſs* of *God*; without at all conſidering, whether they themſelves be *proper* and *capable Objects* of his *Mercy* and *Compaſſion*. And *Theſe* deceive themſelves, by fixing their Attention wholly upon *One ſingle* Attribute of the Divine Nature; and conſider not God as indued with *all* thoſe Perfections together, which compleat the character of an all-wiſe and righteous Governour of the Univerſe. They conſider not, that as *Power*, though *infinite*, is ſtill confined to what is the *Object* of *Power*, and extends not at all to the working of contradictions; ſo *Mercy* likewiſe, however *infinite*, is ſtill limited to the things which are in their Nature the *Objects* of Mercy. Wherefore, though God *is* indeed Long-ſuffering and of Great Patience, and allows men Space and Time of Repentance; yet Sin is not at all the leſs hateful and provoking to him; but his Forbearance when abuſed, will have an End; and his Wrath will, with greater Severity, be executed upon the Impenitent: And the final Puniſhment of Sin is not at all the leſs certain, for being remote and at a diſtance; ſeeing one day is with God as a thouſand years, and a thouſand years as one day; and *the Lord knoweth* (as St. *Peter* expreſſes it, 2 *Pet.* ii. 9,) he knoweth *how to reſerve the unjuſt unto the day of judgment to be puniſhed.* Great therefore is the Deceit, and Fatal the Errour, by which all Thoſe delude themſelves, who continue in Sin, becauſe God's Mercy (they think) and his Goodneſs and Compaſſion abounds. The Danger of *This* Folly, is moſt affectionately expreſs'd *Deut.* xxix. 18; *If there be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood, and it come to paſs when a man heareth the words of this Curſe, that he bleſs himſelf in his Heart, ſaying, I ſhall have Peace though I walk in the Imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenneſs to thirſt*, (that is, to add One Sin to another, to continue in the Practice of *Any* known wickedneſs or Debauchery whatſoever) *The Lord will not ſpare him, but the Anger of the Lord ſhall ſmoke againſt That Man, and All the Curſes that are written in this Book ſhall lie upon him.*

But the frequenteſt, and of all others, the moſt extenſive *Deceits*, are the two following. *Firſt*, a careleſs miſunderſtanding of certain Texts of Scripture, wherein Salvation may ſeem to be promiſed upon *Other* Terms, than the Practice of Virtue and true Righteouſneſs. And *Secondly*, An imaginary Deſign of *Future Repentance*.

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Iſt; It is a very common Deluſion, for falſe and corrupt Minds to deceive themſelves with a careleſs miſinterpretation of certain Texts of Scripture, wherein Salvation may ſeem to be promiſed upon *Other* terms, than the Practice of Virtue and true Righteouſneſs. Thus when the Scripture declares, that *the juſt*
Rom. i. 17. *ſhall live by* Faith, and that *a man is juſtified by* Faith *without the deeds of the*
iii. 28. *Law*; they imagine that a *confident* Belief of perhaps they know not what, will bring them to Salvation; Whereas the *Texts* ſpeak of That Obedience of Faith, which is the *Practice of Virtue* required by the *Doctrine*, and ſupported by the *Belief* of the *Promiſes* of the *Goſpel*. When St. *Paul* tells us, that Chriſt *is*
1 Cor. i. 30. *made unto us Righteouſneſs and Sanctification*; they fancy that the Righteouſneſs of *Chriſt himſelf*, ſhall be imputed to *Them*; Whereas the Meaning of the Apoſtle is, that the Motives and Aſſiſtances of the *Goſpel of Chriſt*, are effectually ſufficient to reform Mankind, and induce them to become truly Virtuous and
Eph. ii. 15. Holy. When the ſame Apoſtle aſſures us, that *by* Grace *we are ſaved*; they are willing to ſuppoſe, that This ſignifies the *Abſolute and Groundleſs Favour or Partiality of God*; Whereas the *Grace* There meant, is That *Grace of God which bringeth Salvation* unto *All men*, by *Teaching us, that denying Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World.* And it is *Therefore* ſtiled *Grace*, becauſe the Benefit of it is *graciouſly* and *mercifully* extended to ſuch as have *formerly* been *wicked*, if they *Now* effectually *reform and amend.*

2 Theſ. ii. 13. Again: When the Scripture ſays that *God has from the Beginning choſen us to Salvation*, and that *of his own Will he begat us with the Word of Truth*, and
Jam. i. 18. the like; men of This diſpoſition are very apt to imagine, that the *Will of God* here ſpoken of, is Some *particular arbitrary, unalterable, and unconditionate Decree*; Whereas the Apoſtle plainly means the *Doctrine and Conditions of the Goſpel in* general, which by the gracious Will and Good Pleaſure of God, are Now declared to be the Terms of Salvation. The *Jews of old* thus flattered themſelves, (and with much *more Appearance of Reaſon*,) that, by the abſolute Favour and Determination of God, they were unalterably his Choſen or Elect people. But our Saviour declared to them on the contrary: *Matt.* viii. 11; *Many ſhall come from the Eaſt and Weſt, and ſhall ſit down with Abraham and Iſaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven; but the children of the Kingdom ſhall be caſt out into outer Darkneſs.* And St. *Paul* in like manner, *Rom.* ii. 6; *God will render to every man according to his Deeds,— to the Jew firſt, and alſo to the Gentile.* If therefore *God ſpared not the Natural Branches*, his *originally elect* people the *Jews*, but *caſt them off for their Unbelief*; much more ought the *ingraſted Branches*, as the Apoſtle by way of Analogy ſtiles the *Chriſtian* Believers, to *take heed leſt he alſo ſpare not Them.* For *if, while we ſeek to be*
2 Theſ. ii. 13. *juſtified by Chriſt, we ourſelves alſo are found Sinners*: Gal. ii. 17; it will nothing profit us to have been *from the* Beginning *choſen unto Salvation, through Sanctification of the Spirit and Belief of the Truth*; when, *in the* End, we *turn this Grace of God into Wantonneſs*; and the *Belief of the Truth* produces not in *Practice* That *Sanctification of the Spirit*, which is the Habit of real Virtue and Righteouſneſs.

Under the *ſame* head of Deceit, therefore, may be placed the Errour of Thoſe, who, becauſe the Scripture often lays ſo great a Streſs upon the *Belief of the Truth*, are thence apt to value themſelves more upon the *Rightneſs* of their
2 Theſ. ii. 13. *Opinions*, than upon the Goodneſs of their *Morals*: Whereas the *only View*, in which the Scripture ever regards *Belief of the Truth*, is conſidering it as the *Foundation* of *Virtuous Practice*. Without *which Effect*, not *Right Opinions* only, but alſo *all Other* Qualifications whatſoever, are in the *Religious eſtimation* of things, reputed as Nothing. *Though I ſpeak with the tongues of Men and of Angels,—and though I have the Gift of Prophecy, and underſtand all Myſteries and all Knowledge, and though I have all Faith, ſo that I could remove Mountains, and have not Charity*, (*i. e.* an univerſal Deſire of doing what is *Right* and *Good* to All men; *I am Nothing*: 1. Cor. xiii. 1.

Under

Under the *ſame* Head of Deceit likewiſe, may be ranked *all Superſtitious Commutations* whatſoever; every thing, by which vain men take upon them to ſupply the want of True Virtue and Goodneſs; all *Sorceries* or Charms, as St. *John* ſtiles them, *Rev.* xviii. 23; *by which the Nations are Deceived*; Such as are *Proceſſions*, *Pilgrimages*, *Penances*, *Abſolutions*, *Extreme Unctions*, and the like: In a word, every thing that *one man* can do *to* or *for* Another, every thing that *Any man* can do for *himſelf*, any otherwiſe than by *keeping the Commandments of God* in the Habit of a ſober, virtuous, and good Life. For, what Deluſions ſo ever, and in whatſoever various Forms, men impoſe upon themſelves; ſtill the Apoſtle's aſſertion will for ever remain true: *He* only *that Doth Righteouſneſs, is Righteous*, and *Whatſoever a man ſoweth, That ſhall he alſo reap.* SERM. XXXV.

2*dly*, The *Other* of thoſe Two Great Deceits, which I ſaid were of all Others the moſt frequent and extenſive, is an *imaginary Deſign of Future Repentance*. The Great Doctrine of the Goſpel is, that whoſoever ſincerely and effectually repents, ſhall obtain remiſſion of his paſt Sins by virtue of the Redemption and Interceſſion of Chriſt. To a World ignorant of the *Will*, and doubtful of the Extent of the *Mercy* of God, This Doctrine was the *Glad Tidings* of Peace and Salvation: An *Encouragement*, to Amendment and Reformation; a *New Ground*, and *Support* of Virtue; A *Grace* or Favour of God, *which brought Salvation*, by *Teaching men, that denying Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, they ſhould* for the future *live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent World*, and Thereupon be accepted of God. For *Chriſtians*, to whom the Will of God and the Neceſſity of Holineſs has been clearly revealed, to take from hence an occaſion of flattering themſelves, that they can indulge themſelves in debauching and unrighteous Living, and repent when they think fit; is (in the Apoſtle's phraſe) *turning the Grace of God into Wantonneſs*, making *Chriſt the Miniſter of Sin*, or (in the words of the Text) *deceiving themſelves* by *attempting to mock God*. For the *Repentance* ſpoken of in the Goſpel, is not the *Paſſion*, but the *Virtue* of *Repentance*; It is a Real *Change of Mind*, evidencing itſelf in ſuch a Real *Amendment of Life and Manners*, as is in Scripture very properly and ſignificantly ſtiled *The New Man*. Moſt juſtly therefore do we condemn thoſe of the Church of *Rome*, when they place imaginary *Penances* and a repeated Circle of *Confeſſions to the Prieſt* in the room of this *Real Change of Life and Manners*. And (which is of much greater *moment* for *Us* to conſider,) no leſs juſtly ſhall *We* alſo fall into the *ſame* condemnation, if we place a repeated Circle of *Confeſſion to God himſelf*, or any thing elſe whatſoever it be, in the room of *Real Virtue and Amendment of Life*. For, let us not *deceive ourſelves*; *God is not mocked: Whatſoever a man ſoweth, That ſhall he alſo reap.*

SERMON XXXVI.

Of Future Rewards and Punishments.

MATT. xxv. 46.

And These shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into life eternal.

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THESE words, are the conclusion of that moving and most affectionate description, which our Saviour himself gives us of his final coming to judgment. Ver. 31; *When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy Angels with him; then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a Shepherd divideth the Sheep from the goats: And he shall set the Sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.* Ver. 34; *Then shall the King say unto them on his right Hand; Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World.* Ver. 41; *Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand; Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the devil and his Angels.* The *immediate* execution of *Both* which Sentences, is accordingly set forth in the concluding words of the Text: *And*

And These shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into life eternal.

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The Arguments proper to perswade men to the Practice of Virtue, drawn from the *abstract* consideration of the *Nature* and *Reason* of Things; from the *intrinsick Beauty* and *Excellency* of *Virtue*, and the *Deformity* of *Vice*; from the *Usefulness* and *proper Tendency* of *Virtue* to promote the *general Welfare* of Men, even in this *present* State, and the *mischievous* Consequences of *Wickedness* and *Debauchery* to the *World*: Arguments, I say, of *this* kind, in their proper Place and Season, to generous and considerate Minds, and in suitable Circumstances of things; *have* in them a *real* Weight of Truth, and carry along with them, when impartially attended to, an undeniable Force of rational Conviction. But in a *corrupt*, and *confused* World; where the Wickedness of *Some*, hinders the Virtue of *Others*, from producing its just and natural Effects; where the *Understandings* of *Many*, are *perplexed* and *puzzled*; and the *Wills* of *More*, are *biassed* by ill Habits; and where the *Best* are frequently *hated* and *persecuted*, even for the sake of their very *Virtue* itself: In *Such* a confused State, the most *universally* proper, and *only* effectual Motive, to *deter* men from *Vice*, and *perswade* them to their *Duty*; is the laying before them, in a clear and strong Light, the *Rewards* and *Punishments* of a future State. *These shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal.*

The word, *These*, refers to the *Uncharitable* persons described, *ver.* 42; *I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye cloathed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.* And the *Righteous* on the contrary, who were to enter into life, are described under the correspondent Character of Persons exemplarily *charitable*: Ver. 35; *I was an hungred, and ye gave me Meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a Stranger, and ye took me in; Naked, and ye cloathed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.* The Meaning of which Descriptions, is; not, that at the great day of Accounts, the Virtue of Charity *Alone* will be enquired after; but that *Charity* is so eminent and principal a Virtue, one of those *Great Commandments* on which the Law and the Prophets and the whole Gospel lay so particular a Stress, that, by a very easy and common *Figure* of putting a Part for the Whole, it naturally and very expressively represents the *Whole of Religion*. In *Other* places of Scripture, sometimes *Faith*, sometimes *Holiness*, sometimes the *Love*, sometimes the *Fear* of God, according to the particular occasion upon which it is introduced, signifies, without Any ambiguity, the same as *Virtue in general*. And *here* in like manner, because, in representing the Solemnity of the Last Judgment, the descriptions of a *charitable* or *uncharitable* Behaviour are in their Nature very *affectionate* Images, and apt most *strongly* to *move* the Hearers; for This Reason (I presume) our Saviour chose to set forth under those *particular* Images, the Two *General* Characters of the *Righteous* and the *Wicked* at the Great Day. The *full* Sense therefore of this Declaration of our Saviour, (*These shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal,*) is, that at the great and final Judgment, every Man shall be recompensed, in a proportionable State either of Happiness or Misery, according to the *Nature* and the *Degree* of his *Works*. The Impious and the Profane, the Blasphemer and the Idolater, the unrighteous and unjust, the Tyrant and the Oppressour, the unholy and the unclean, the hard-hearted and uncharitable, and the Workers of *Every* iniquity, inconsistent with the *Love of God* and *Charity towards Men*; these he shall condemn to everlasting Destruction, from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his Majesty. On the *other* hand, all virtuous and good Men, all just and righteous and religious Persons, who, from the Beginning of their Lives, or from the time of their breaking off their Sins by Repentance; either under the Light of

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The *Beginning* of these *Rewards and Punishments*, as they are founded partly in the *natural consequences* of things, is *cotemporary* with the *Practice itself* of Virtue or Vice. For in this *present life*, besides the *Benefits* of *Virtue* to *Mankind in general*, and the *destructive Consequences* of *Vice* to the *World*; the Happiness of every *particular* man's *own* Mind has necessarily a very great dependence upon that *Conscience* of Good and Evil, which unavoidably attends virtuous or vicious Actions. In the *intermediate separate State* between Death and Judgment, when the Vanities of this deceitful World shall be at an end, and the Delusions and False Colours here put upon things shall all entirely disappear; the natural Effects and Impressions made by virtuous or vicious Habits upon the minds of Men, will be still more lively and sensible. Besides; In That State, the Righteous cannot but be very happy, through the certain *expectation* of that Crown of Righteousness, which they know the Lord the Righteous Judge shall give them at That day; And the Wicked, on the contrary, cannot but be made very miserable, by a *certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation*, though the irreversible Sentence shall not be actually executed upon them before the Great Day. These therefore are, in their several kinds and degrees, attestations given to the Divine Justice by the *Nature and Truth* of *Things*, and by mens own *Consciences*, *anticipating* the Righteous Judgment of God. But the *final* and *unalterable* distribution of Rewards and Punishments, in exactness of Weight and Measure, according to the unerring decisions of Omniscient Justice; will not be made, till our Lord's passing that judicial Sentence in the great Day of Accounts, in consequence of which *The Wicked shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal.*

The *Sense* and *Meaning* of the words is plain and obvious, so that they have little need of particular *Explication*: But the *Weight* and *Importance* of them is such, that they can never be too *frequently* and seriously *meditated* upon. Yet so it is, that even the *Plainness* and *Clearness itself* of this most important of All Doctrines, is probably often the occasion of Men's neglecting to attend to it. For as the *strongest Objects*, which make perpetually an equal and continued Impression upon our Senses, are apt, by reason of their constant Presence, to affect us little more, than if they made No impression upon the Sense at all: And as the daily Instances of *Mortality*, which ought continually to remind us what we must speedily expect, do by an habitual Carelessness, reconcile Men in such manner to the Sight of it in Others, as if themselves were not at all concerned in the Example: So, with regard to the *Rewards and Punishments of a future State*, the *Doctrine in general* is looked upon as so settled and established among Christians that Men care not to be reminded or to remind themselves of That, which they think they already very well know, and in which there is no room for new Instruction. Hence their Knowledge, without Meditation, becomes very like unto Ignorance; because it has No Effect, and makes no Impression: It is like the Speculative Knowledge, of a Truth not attended to; like the habitual Understanding of a Demonstration, never recollected. In order to remedy *This* evil, the Scripture sets forth to us both the *Judgment in general*, and the future *Rewards* and *Punishments* in *particular*; under great variety of the *strongest Images*, and of the most *lively*, *moving*, and

" *and* affectionate Descriptions. *In* general: God, *saith St.* Paul, will render SERM.
" to every man according to his deeds; To them, who by patient continuance XXXVI.
" in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality; eternal life:
" But to them that are contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey Un-
" righteousness; indignation and wrath: Tribulation and anguish upon every
" Soul of man that doth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile, *Rom.*
" ii. 6: *And the* manner *of the* Solemnity, *he* thus *describes*; 1 Th. iv. 16; The
" Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the
" Archangel, and with the Trump of God; And the dead in Christ shall rise
" first. *Our* Saviour, *in his* own *account of this matter, expresses himself* thus;
" Joh. v. 28; All that are in the graves, shall hear his Voice, and shall come
" forth; they that have done good, unto the Resurrection of Life; and they
" that have done evil, unto the Resurrection of Damnation: *And the* manner
" *of the* Solemnity, *he thus describes*; *in the Beginning of That account, whereof*
" *my Text is the conclusion*; When the Son of man (*says he*) shall come in his
" glory, and all the Holy Angels with him, then shall he sit upon the Throne
" of his glory; And before him shall be gathered all Nations; and he shall
" separate them one from another, as a Shepherd divideth the Sheep from the
" Goats. *The Prophet* Daniel, *in the sublime prophetick style, foretels the final*
" *Judgment thus*; *ch.* xii. 2; Many of them that sleep in the dust of the Earth,
" shall awake; some to everlasting Life, and some to Shame and everlasting
" Contempt: *And the* manner of the Solemnity, *He* thus *describes*; I beheld
" till the Thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit; whose
" Garment was white as the Snow, and the Hair of his Head like the pure
" Wool; His Throne was like the fiery Flame, and his Wheels as burning
" Fire: A fiery Stream issued and came forth from before him; Thousand
" Thousands ministred unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand
" stood before him; the Judgment was set, and the Books were opened;
" *ch.* vii. 9.

" *This in* general. *In* particular: *As to the* Happiness *of the* Righteous
" *at That day*; *Though we Now* know *only* in part, and prophesie in part;
" *and* see *but* through a glass, darkly; *and* it doth not yet appear, what we
" shall be; *because* eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered
" into the Heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love
" him; *Yet the various* Images *and* Similitudes, *by which the Scriptures sets*
" *forth to us this State of Blessedness, are such as represent it under the highest*
" *Characters, of* fulness of joy, *and* pleasures for evermore; *of an* eternal Weight
" of glory; *of a* Kingdom that cannot be moved; *of a* City, whose Builder
" and Maker is God; *of an* Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fad-
" eth not away; *where* neither moth nor rust doth corrupt; and where thieves
" do not break through and steal; *where* they that *have been* wise, shall
" shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that *have* turned Many
" to righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever; *where* the Righteous shall
" shine forth as the Sun, in the Kingdom of their Father; *where the* Spirits
" of just men made perfect, *That* general Assembly and Church of the First-
" born which are written in Heaven, *shall converse for ever with* the innumera-
" ble Company of Angels, *and with* Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant,
" *and with God himself* the Judge of all; *and* they shall see his Face, and his
" Name shall be in their foreheads; *and* they shall be before the throne of
" God, and shall serve him day and night in his temple; *They* shall hunger no
" more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the Sun light on them, nor any
" Heat; For God shall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes, and there shall
" be no more Death, neither Sorrow nor Crying, neither shall there be any
" more Pain; for the former things are passed away.

" *On the* other *hand, though we know not distinctly the exact* particulars *of the*
" Punishment *of the* Wicked *in the future State*; *yet This we may be well as-*
" *sured of, that it is not a* mere empty Threatning, *that the* Lord Jesus shall
" be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels, In flaming fire taking

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" vengeance on them that know not (*that is, who* acknowledge not) God, and " that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall be punished " with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glo- " ry of his Power. *Nor is it without just reason, that the Scripture, in order to* " *deter men from Sin, sets forth this Punishment to us under the* severe *representa-* " *tion, of an* everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels; *where* " the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched; *where* shall be Weep- " ing and gnashing of Teeth; *where they* shall drink of the Wrath of God, " poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation; and shall be " tormented with fire and brimstone; and the Smoke of their Torment a- " scendeth up for ever and ever; and they have no Rest, day nor night: " *Insomuch that our Saviour, as it were* overlooking *temporal Death, as being* " *comparatively Nothing; says concerning* Such *persons that they* shall not *Taste* " of Death, till they see the Son of man coming in his Kingdom.

Some *Unbelievers*, willingly mistaking the Sense of these Threatnings, as they *love* to mistake every thing else in Scripture; have endeavoured to draw an argument from hence against the *Truth of the Gospel*, as if it represented God under a character more *severe*, than is consistent with the essential Attributes of his Nature. And indeed Some *Christian* Writers, in their heedless Systems, and unwarranted Accounts of God's Proceedings, it must be confessed, have given but too just occasion for such an Objection; when, after having set forth, in *Scripture-expressions*, the severest Denunciations of the divine Vengeance against the Great Enemies of God and Goodness, against the unrighteous and the profane, against the profligate and the debauched, against the obstinately wicked and incorrigible; immediately, *without* any warrant at all from *Scripture*, nay, in direct *contradiction to it*; they suppose the *same* tremendous Punishment to be inflicted, upon *infants* who never actually sinned, or upon men *reprobated* by the mere arbitrary Will of God, or upon All who follow not such or such *Particular Sects* or *Doctrines of Men*, or *promiscuously and without distinction* upon *all sorts* and *degrees* of *Sinners* who shall not attain unto the Happiness of Heaven. But the *Scripture* does not so speak. We *There* find, that *the Judge of the Whole Earth will do what is Right:* That the final wrath of God shall be inflicted upon all impenitent Offenders, not promiscuously, but in weight and measure, precisely according to every one's Deserts: That it shall be *more tolerable in the day of Judgment for* Some than for Others who *shall receive a* greater *condemnation:* That Some *shall be beaten with Few stripes*, and Others *with Many:* That the Punishment of *All*, shall be inflicted *in the presence of the Holy Angels, and in the presence of the Lamb*; who shall accordingly be Witnesses of the Justness and of the Equity of its proportions: That God therefore will be thoroughly *justified in his Sayings, and clear when he is judged:* That *every mouth shall be stopped before him*; that is, shall have nothing to object against the reasonableness of his Proceedings: And that, when *he cometh with ten thousand of his Saints, to execute judgment upon All*; he shall *convince* Sinners, not only of *all their ungodly deeds*, but of their *hard Speeches* also *which they have spoken against him.* And this is a full Answer to the Objection raised by *Some* Unbelievers, from the *Severity* of the Divine Threatnings as expressed in the *New Testament.*

Another Sort of them there are, who will pretend that *Virtue* ought to be chosen for its *own* sake; and that when it is practised through Hope of *Reward* or Fear of *Punishment*, it ceases to have the Nature of Virtue. But in *This* also, they greatly err. For though Virtue *is* indeed very excellent and amiable in itself, and what a reasonable Agent cannot but always acknowledge to be his Duty to choose; yet if God has not annexed to it any sufficient encouragement, to support Men effectually in that Choice; it would follow that the *Nature of things*, and the *final Dispositions of Providence*, were an inconsistency; It being indeed neither *possible* nor *truly reasonable*, that Men by adhering to Virtue should at any time lose their Lives, if thereby they were

were to deprive themselves eternally of all possibility of receiving any Benefit from That Adherence. It is very fit therefore, that what is in its *own nature* good and excellent, should at the same Time be supported and encouraged, by *Him* who is *essentially Good* and *Powerful over All*. Besides, that the *Rewards*, which *He* proposes, have in their *Nature* a just and proper *congruity*, and are of the *same Kind* with *virtue itself*. For which reason, the Antient Worthies in Scripture are never *blamed*, but *commended* for *seeking a better Country*, that is, *an heavenly*: And even *Moses*, had *respect unto the recompence of Reward*: Nay, and *our Lord* himself, *for the joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame, and is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God.* SERM. XXXVI.

Lastly, Others there are, who have presumptuously taken upon them to argue, that, according to *Their* Notions of the Divine Goodness, *All* Creatures should be made capable of *Happiness only*, and *None* of them liable to fall into *Misery*. But *then* it would follow, that God had *no Right* to create *Any* rational or *free* Agents at all. For where-ever there is *Freedom*, (except only in *God himself*, who is by Nature *essentially* and *immutably* Good; where-ever else, I say, there is *Freedom*,) in *whatever* proportion and Degree it be, there *must* be accordingly a Power of choosing *Evil* as well as *Good*: And where there is no possibility of *Disobedience*, there can be properly no *Obedience* neither; nor *Any Virtue*, where there is no room for *Vice*. Sufficient it is, that God, the Supreme Judge and Governour of All, will deal with every one *proportionally* according to their respective Circumstances; and will finally punish even incorrigible Wickedness itself, not arbitrarily, but according to its just Deserts; and in such manner as shall appear to become *Him*, who is *All-Wise* and *Good* as well as *All-Powerful*, to act in his Government of the Universe. "Wisd. xii. 12; Who "shall accuse thee for the nations that perish, whom thou hast made? or "who shall come to stand against thee to be revenged for the unrighteous "men?— Forasmuch as thou art righteous thyself, thou orderest all things righ-"teously; thinking it not agreeable with thy Power, to condemn him that hath "not deserved to be punished.

"*The* Application *of the* Whole *of what has been said, is briefly as follows.* "*In general*: *If it be agreeable to* Reason, *that there* should *be future Re-*"*wards and Punishments*; *and from* Scripture, *certain that there* shall *be such*: "*Then ought we, with St.* Peter, *to infer*; What manner of persons ought "we to be, in all Holy conversation and godliness! *Then more particularly,* "*with regard to* wicked *men*; knowing the Terrour of the Lord, we *ought* "*continually to* perswade *them, that they* treasure *not* up unto themselves "wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous Judg-"ment of God. *Always reminding them of our Saviour's Admonition*; I will "forewarn you Whom you shall fear; fear Him, who after he has killed, "is able to destroy both Soul and Body in Hell; yea, I say unto you, "fear Him: *And*, if thine Eye offend thee, (*that is, if any thing very dear and* "*valuable to thee, cause thee to sin*;) pluck it out, and cast it from thee; It is "better for thee to enter into the Kingdom of God with One eye, than, ha-"ving two eyes, to be cast into hell-fire; where the worm dieth not, and the "Fire is not quenched.

"*Likewise, with regard to* Good *men*; *we may from the same ground perpetu-*"*ally exhort them*, to look, not at the things that are temporal, but at the "things that are eternal: *Considering, that* the afflictions of this present "time, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with "the glory which shall be revealed hereafter. *For*, the Souls of the Righ-"teous (*as the Author of the Book of* Wisdom *affectionately expresses it*) are "in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them: In the sight "of the unwise they seemed to die, and their departure is taken for mi-"sery: But—— in the time of their Visitation they shall shine, and run to Wisd. iii. v. 15.

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" and fro like ſparks among the Stubble: They ſhall judge the nations, and
" have dominion over the people, and their Lord ſhall reign for ever. *Then*
" *the Wicked*, groaning for anguiſh of Spirit, ſhall ſay; We fools accounted
" his life madneſs, and his end to be without honour: How is he numbred a-
" mong the children of God, and his lot is among the Saints! We have erred
" from the way of truth, and—wearied ourſelves in the way of wickedneſs
" and deſtruction:—But the righteous live for evermore; their Reward alſo
" is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the moſt High.

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SERMON XXXVII.

How Wicked Men are of the Devil.

JOH. viii. 44. former part of the Verſe.

Ye are of your Father the Devil, and the Luſts of your Father ye will do.

IN the beginning of this chapter, we find the *Scribes and Phariſees* (ver. 3.) tempting our Saviour with inſidious queſtions, *that they might have to accuſe him*, ver. 6; which not ſucceeding, they in the next place object againſt the *Evidence* he brought, of his coming from God: Ver. 13. *The Phariſees therefore ſaid unto him, Thou bearest record of thy ſelf, thy record is not true.* To This, he replies, ver. 16, 18, that he was *not alone*; that he did not expect, they ſhould believe him upon his *own* teſtimony; but that the *Father that ſent* him, *bare witneſs of him*; that is, that the agreeableneſs of his Doctrine to the known Will of God, the correſpondence of his Behaviour to the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament, and the miraculous Works which God enabled him to do, were undeniable Proofs of his divine Commiſſion. Ver. 26, 29, *He that ſent me, is true; and I ſpeak to the World thoſe things which I have heard of Him:—And he that ſent me, is with me; the Father hath not left me alone.* Hereupon, not knowing what further to object, ſome of them *pretended to believe* on him, and *joined themſelves* with others who were ſincerely convinced, ver. 30. Deſigning, as appears plainly from what

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SERM. XXXVII. follows to find ſome opportunity, under this pretence of *believing on him*, to deliver him into the hands of theſe who ſought his Life; ver. 37; *Ye ſeek to kill me, becauſe my word has no place in you.* In reproof of which wicked and deteſtable Deſign, he tells them that though by *natural Deſcent* they alledged *Abraham* to be their Father; ver. 9; and, by *outward Profeſſion of religion*, ſaid that *God* was their Father, ver. 41; yet in truth and reality, by the wickedneſs of their Life and Manners, they ſhowed themſelves to be *children of the Devil*, ver. 44; *Ye are of your Father the Devil, and the Luſts of your Father ye will do.*

In diſcourſing upon which words, I ſhall *firſt* offer two or three *general* Obſervations upon the *whole*; and *Then* I ſhall conſider the ſeveral Phraſes more diſtinctly in *particular*.

The *Firſt general* Obſervation I would make upon the words of the Text, is, that our Saviour plainly *ſuppoſes* in his *manner* of ſpeaking, that men *become* what he here calls *children of the Devil*, by no other way than by their own *obſtinate Choice* and *wilful vicious practice: The Luſts of your Father* (ſays he) *ye* will *do.* There is nothing in any *Appointment* of *God*, or in the *Nature* of *Man*, that determines any one to be what our Saviour here deſcribes under ſo ſevere a character. 'Tis a character, not of any *natural* Quality or Diſpoſition, but of mere *wilful* Perverſeneſs, of obſtinate and malicious Corruption. *The Luſts of your Father, ye* will *do.* Contrary to *Nature*, contrary to *Reaſon*, contrary to innumerable *Divine Admonitions*, contrary to *All the Obligations* that *can* be incumbent upon men; ye *will* do ſuch things, as no *Miſtake*, no *Frailty*, no *Infirmity* can be pleaded in Excuſe for; but ſuch things, as proceed evidently from direct *Malice*, and bear the neareſt reſemblance to *That manner* of Sinning, which caſt ſome of the *Angels* out of their firſt habitation into everlaſting chains under Darkneſs. *Ye are of your Father, the Devil; and the Luſts of your Father, ye* will *do.*

Secondly; I obſerve, that *as* the Wickedneſs which our Saviour *here* reproves in the *Text*, is *therefore* repreſented by him as *diabolical*, becauſe it was in the higheſt degree *wilful*, and againſt the cleareſt Light; *ſo* in *all* other places, where-ever he uſes *ſharpneſs* and *ſeverity of expreſſion*, 'tis aways againſt things in their own nature *immoral:* Such as in the Text are ſtiled *Luſts*, that is, *vicious and immoral Practices* loved and delighted in: *The* Luſts *of your Father, ye will do. Errours* and *Miſtakes* of all kinds, he argued againſt with the greateſt Meekneſs: *Frailties* and *Infirmities* of all ſorts, he reproved with the utmoſt Gentleneſs: *Penitents*, who had been guilty of many and great Sins, but capable of reformation and amendment; he received and comforted with all poſſible Tenderneſs. The *Syrophœnician* woman, who was a *Stranger* in *Iſrael*, obtained of him her Requeſt. The *Samaritan* woman, and Others of that hated Sect, received Inſtruction from him at large; to the Wonder of his own Diſciples; and to the bringing upon him from the *Jews*, much Reproach and Scandal, who gave him the ignominious name of being a *Samaritan* Himſelf. *Peter's* denying him upon a Surprize, he reproved with the friendly expoſtulation of a Look. *Sinners* of *all* kinds, upon whom any good was to be done, he freely and familiarly converſed with, and invited to Repentance; inſomuch that his Enemies ſtiled him, by way of Contempt, a *Friend* of *Publicans and Sinners.* But incorrigible Lovers of *Immorality*, *Devourers of Widows Houſes*, and men of *corrupt intention*; whoſe Hearts, like Sepulchres filled with dead mens bones, were full of Unrighteouſneſs and all Uncleanneſs; theſe he *never* ſpared, theſe he always reproved with the greateſt *Freedom* and *Earneſtneſs.*

Thirdly; I obſerve, that of all the *Several Kinds* of *Immorality and Unrighteouſneſs*, which our Saviour reproves in his Goſpel; *That*, againſt which he, in a ſtill more *particular* and *diſtinguiſhing* manner, directs his *higheſt* Expreſſions of *Severity*, not without ſome *warmth* even of *Indignation*; is the Practice of thoſe *Hypocrites*, who, *in matters of* Religion, put Deceits upon the World; living viciouſly *themſelves*, and not caring *what Burdens* they lay upon *other Men. Luke* xi. 46, 52; *Wo unto* you, ſays he, *ye Lawyers*; (that is, Teachers and Expoſitors of the Law of *Moſes*; *for ye lade men with Burdens grievous to be born, and ye yourſelves touch not the Burdens with one of your Fingers — Wo*

unto

unto you; for ye have taken away the key of knowledge; ye entred not in yourselves, and them that were entring in, ye hindred. And again, *Matt.* xxiii. 33; *Ye Serpents*, saith he, *ye generation of Vipers, how can ye escape the Damnation of Hell?* The *reason* of this *singular* and extraordinary severity, in our Lord who upon all *other* occasions was all meekness; the *reason* (I say) of his peculiar Severity in *This* case, is the *Great Weight and Importance* of the Thing. *Religion*, is the Light of the World; *And if the* Light *that is in men be* itself *Darkness, how great must the darkness be?* If the *Rule* and *Guide* of mens Actions, be it self perverted; and That which should direct their feet into the paths of Virtue and Goodness, be itself transformed into Blind opinions and external Forms, which afford matter only for Strife and Contentions and Uncharitableness amongst men; how great must the corruption of manners, necessarily be! This was the true and just ground of our Saviour's peculiar Severity towards the Scribes and Pharisees and Expounders of the Law among the *Jews*: And it ought, at *all* times, and in *all* places, to make men very careful, that they represent Religion faithfully and sincerely in its Simplicity, as the Truth is in Christ, and not according to the accidental Traditions of Men at *different Times*, and in *different Places*: And that *Religion*, whose great End is Piety towards God, and universal Righteousness and Charity towards Men, never be made a ground of Hatred and Animosity, of Party and Faction, of Power and worldly Dominion among Christians; which is always a Demonstration, and an Effect, of great Corruption.

These Observations being premised *in general*; I proceed now to consider the expressions used by our Saviour in the Text, more distinctly and in *particular*: What is meant, by Wicked mens being *of their Father the Devil*; and what, by their *doing* his *Lusts*.

I. *First*; In order to understand clearly, what is meant by Wicked men's being *of their Father the Devil*; 'tis to be observed, that in the nature of *Things*, according to the tenour of *Scripture*, All Rational Beings whatsoever, capable of Good and Evil, of Obedience and Disobedience, must be created originally in a State of Tryal or Probation. Answerable therefore to what we see amongst *Men*, 'tis reasonable to suppose, that, among all *Other* creatures likewise indued with Freedom of Will; allowing for their respective Circumstances, Powers and Capacities; there will be proportionably a Difference of Behaviour. And accordingly the Scripture expressly assures us, that, among *Angels*, *Some* continued to be *the Servants of God, who do his Pleasure*; and that *Others* of them *Sinned*, and *kept not their first Estate, but left their own habitation*. And concerning the *Chief* of these, our Saviour in This verse, of which my Text is a part, tells us that *from the beginning he abode not in the Truth*. What the *particular* Sin of these disobedient Angels was, is not distinctly revealed; and therefore 'tis a *weak*, as well as *vain* curiosity, to make conjectures about it. *This only* we may be very sure of, that it was not, as Some have incautiously represented it, a rebelling against God by way of *open force*; but a presuming foolishly, as wicked *Men* also do, to transgress the Laws of their Nature and their God. For no creature, or number of creatures, can possibly *in the way of* Force rebel against God; in whose hand the whole Universe, is less than nothing; and their being, he can, whenever he pleases, withdraw from them in a moment. When therefore we read in Scripture, concerning *War in Heaven*; and of the *Dragon* and *His* Angels, *fighting* against *Michael* and *His* Angels; 'tis manifest it must, according to the nature of the prophetick language, be understood *figuratively*, concerning *contentions* and *persecutions* in the *Church*, upon account of matters of *Religion*. For the *Church*, or Whole Number of Sincere Believers, is the *House* or *City* of *God*; and the Persecutors of Christ's true Disciples, are in Scripture represented as *blaspheming them that dwell in* Heaven. In like manner, when St. *Jude* mentions *Michael the Arch-Angel*, ver. 9, *contending with the Devil about the Body of Moses*; 'tis probably an Allusion to certain Disputes in the *Jewish* Church, concerning the *Substance* of the *Law* or Religion of *Moses*: For the very same Phrase is used by St. *Paul* concerning the *Gospel*, Rom. vii. 4; *Ye are dead to the Law, by the* Body *of Christ*, that is, by the *Gospel*: And

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Col. ii. 17; These things *are a* Shadow *of things to come; but the* Body, (or Substance,) *is of Christ.* From the figurativeness therefore of these expressions, as well as from the nature and evident reason of the thing itself, 'tis plain that the *Kingdom* of *Satan*, set up in opposition to the *Kingdom* of *God*, is not literally a Kingdom of *Force* or *Power*, but in the spiritual sense a *Kingdom* or *Party*, a *Dominion* or *Prevalency* of *Sin*, in opposition to the *Kingdom* or *Establishment* of *Righteousness*. Departing from *Virtue* and *Goodness*, is revolting from the *Kingdom of God*, and declaring that we *will not have Him to reign over* us. The *Head* of this transgression, the Original or Beginner of Disobedience and Unrighteousness, among all the rational creatures of whom *We* have any Knowledge; is the *Devil*. And all wicked *Spirits*, perhaps all wicked *Men* also, who either by his enticement, or, after his example, transgress the Laws of their Creator; are in Scripture stiled *His Angels*; Matt. xxv. 41, *everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and* his Angels: and sometimes *his* children; as in the words of the Text, *Ye are of your* Father *the Devil*. The phrase is very elegant, and, according to the analogy of the *Jewish* language, very usual and very expressive. For the highest way, in That language, of expressing any particular Quality, Similitude, or Relation, is by stiling men the *children* of that *Thing* or *Person*, by which any extraordinary Quality, Similitude, or Relation, is intended to be expressed. Thus, men of *meek* and calm Spirits, are in Scripture called *Sons* of *peace*; and outragious *Oppressors*, *Sons* of *Violence*. Men of true *courage*, are *Sons* of *Valour*; and, in a still sublimer figure, *Sons* of *Thunder*. Persons of exemplary *Virtue*, *faith*, and *piety*, of whatever nation they be, are *children* of *Abraham*: And *Judas*, on the contrary, for his singular corruptness, is stiled the *Son* of *Perdition*. Men under the Sentence of *condemnation*, are called *Sons* of *Death*; and persons under any great or lasting *Distress*, *Sons* and *Daughters* of *affliction*. And *Thus* likewise, by the *same figure* of Speech, all *righteous* and *good* men, imitators of the divine Virtues, are frequently mentioned under This Denomination, as being Children *of* God; and *God* is spoken of as being *Their Father*. In the words just before my Text; *Jesus said to* the *Jews*, *If* God *were your* Father, *ye would love him*. And *wicked* men, on the contrary, are stiled *Sons* of *Belial*, and *children of the* Devil, 1 Joh. iii. 10; the *children of the wicked One*, Matt. xiii. 38; and in the words of the Text, *Ye are of your* Father *the Devil*. And from hence; as *God*, not with regard to his *absolute Kingdom* and *natural Dominion* over the Universe, but with regard to his being (in the *moral* and *religious* Sense) *The* Father, *of whom the whole* spiritual *family in heaven and earth is named*, has the Title given him of *King of Saints*, Rev. xv. 3: So the *Devil*; not as having any *natural* Power to set up *literally* any *Kingdom* or *true Dominion* in opposition to the Almighty; but as being the *Beginner* of *Sin and Disobedience*, or the *Head* of that unrighteousness which has widely *spread* over a degenerate World; is, in a moral and figurative Sense, stiled in Scripture, *the* Prince of *this World*; and, *the God of this World*; the Prince *of the Power of the Air*, *the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*: And they who resist and conquer the Temptations of *Sin*, are consequently represented as being *delivered from the Power of Darkness*, Col. i. 13; and as *wrestling*, Eph. vi. 12, *against Principalities*, *against Powers*, *against the Rulers of the darkness of this World*, *against spiritual wickedness in high places*.

Having thus at large explained the Meaning of this *first* phrase in the Text, that Wicked and profane men *are of their Father the Devil*: It remains in the

II. *Second* place, that I proceed to consider what is meant by that *Other* expression, of *doing his Lusts*: *The Lusts of your Father, ye will do*. Now from what has been already said, 'tis evident that This phrase very properly signifies *Every kind* of *Sin* and *Wickedness* whatsoever. *He that committeth Sin*, he that lives in the habitual Practice of *Any* Sin whatsoever, *is of the Devil*; 1 Joh. iii. 8. For as, *God* being the Author and Lover of All *Good*, the *Doing* of *His Will* implies consequently the Practice of *Every Virtue*: So, the *Devil* being considered as the *Head* of *Apostacy*, and the Beginner and Example of *Transgression*; the *Doing his Lusts*, or following *his Example*, or fulfilling *His Desires*, signifies consequently

conſequently mens delighting, in *Any* Inſtance of *Vice*. Accordingly, in Scripture-phraſe, the *Power of Satan* is the *Habit* of *Any Sin* or Debauchery whatſoever. His *Dominion* or *Kingdom*, or, in the language of our Lord's parable, the *ſtrong man's houſe*, is the Prevailing of *Unrighteouſneſs*, or its taking *Poſſeſſion* of mens *Hearts* and Affections. A *general* corruption of *Manners* in any *place* or *country*, is, what the prophetick language deſcribes by ſtiling ſuch a place, the the place *where Satan dwelleth*, and *where his Seat* (or *Throne*) *is*; Rev, ii. 13. And the *Whole World* being overſpread with great Wickedneſs, or lying *in Wickedneſs*, as we tranſlate That Paſſage in St. *John*, 1 *Joh.* v. 19; is in the original, *The whole World lieth in the* Wicked One: That is, in the *moral* and *figurative* Senſe, is ſubject to the Dominion of *Sin*, and filled with all manner of *unrighteouſneſs*: After the ſame ſame manner of ſpeaking, as good Chriſtians are ſaid to be *in* God, and *in* Chriſt, and *in* him that is *True*; when they anſwer the intent of their Profeſſion, by their *Knowledge* of the *Truth* and by their *Practice* of *Virtue and all Goodneſs*. For the ſame reaſon, when our Lord by the *Light* of his *Goſpel* and by the *Excellency* of his *Precepts*, diſpelled the *Darkneſs* of *Ignorance*, and put an End to the *Impious* and *Superſtitious* Practices, which before prevailed among Mankind; the Scripture calls this *manifeſtation* of *the Son of God*, his *deſtroying the* Works *of the* Devil; 1 Joh. iii. 8. And the ſwift progreſs of the Truth at the beginning, by the ſpeedy propagation of the Goſpel; is, in our Saviour's own expreſſion, *Satan as Lightning falling from Heaven*. By the *Luſts of the Devil* therefore, 'tis plain, is to be underſtood All *Sin*, All *Unrighteouſneſs*, All *Debauchery*, every Breach of God's commandments whatſoever.

Nevertheleſs, in a ſtrict and more reſtrained Senſe, *ſome* Sins there are, which both in Scripture and in the reaſon of the thing, are repreſented as more peculiarly *diabolical*. Of *This* kind, one inſtance is *Falſe Accuſation*, or *Perſecution*: For the *Devil* is ſtiled in Scripture; *The Accuſer of the Brethren*, and 'tis the proper ſignification of the *Name itſelf*.

Another Inſtance is *Pride*; that is, a Spirit of *Inſolence* and *Dominion*, eſpecially if it be in matters of Religion, oppoſite to *Chriſt*'s Spirit of *Truth and Meekneſs*. Concerning This, St. *Paul* ſpeaks, 1 *Tim.* iii. 6; *A* [*Biſhop*, or] Preacher of the Goſpel, *muſt not* (ſays he) be *lifted up with Pride, leſt he fall into the condemnation of the* Devil.

Another Particular of This ſort, is *Witchcraft*: That is, (in the *Scripture-ſenſe* of that word,) Aſtrology, Fortune-telling, and all other *Pretences* of that kind: Which, if they had any *reality* in them, would be *literally* diabolical; and having *no reality* in them, yet they are *truly* diabolical, is being *Cheats*, *Deluſions*, and *Impoſitions* upon Mankind. *Two other* examples, of Sins in their own nature more particularly deviliſh, our Saviour expreſsly names in the words immediately following my Text; *viz. Murder* and *Lying*: *Ye are* (ſays he) *of your Father the Devil, and the Luſts of your Father ye will do: He was a* Murderer *from the Beginning, and abode not in the Truth, becauſe there is no Truth in him: When he ſpeaketh a* Lie, *he ſpeaketh of his own; for he is a* Lyar, *and the Father of it.* The *former* of theſe two inſtances; *Murder*, (*i. e.* Hatred, Malice, Wars, Deſtructions, Deſolations;) is evidently in the higheſt degree imitating the works of *Him*, who by way of eminence is intitled *The Deſtroyer*. The *latter* of theſe; *Lying*, or *not abiding in the Truth*; has generally, in Scripture-language, reference to matters of *Religion*. For, as the *right Knowledge and Worſhip* of God, is frequently, by way of eminence, called The *Truth*; and *God himſelf* is ſtiled emphatically, *He that is* Truth; and our *Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, according to the ſame Analogy, *The Faithful and* True *Witneſs*: So *Idols*, in the prophetick ſtyle, are very uſually called *Lies* and *Lying Vanities*; and under the title of *Lyars*, are primarily comprehended all *Idolaters*: That is, all who pay religious Worſhip where it is not due; applying themſelves to Falſe and imaginary Objects, whether they be fictitious *Gods* or fictitious *Mediators*. *Idolatry* therefore, in the laſt place, (and to conclude this Head,) is the *Chief* of all the *Works of the Devil*, and the moſt immediate and direct oppoſition to God. This, in all

SERM. XXXVII. Ages and Nations of the World, has been the great Spring and Root of innumerable ſorts of Wickedneſs and of the vileſt Immoralities; as St. *Paul* at large ſets forth, *Rom.* i. This, at the firſt planting of the Goſpel, was the great Enemy of Chriſtianity among the *Gentiles*. And though, under the Name of *Heatheniſm* indeed, it be Now intirely aboliſhed in theſe parts of the World; yet there are, even among thoſe who call themſelves *Chriſtians*, ſome that worſhip Images of Wood and Stone, and Other Fancies and Imaginations of their own, inſtead of obeying *the everlaſting Goſpel* in paying their Worſhip to *Him that made Heaven and Earth and all things that are therein*; and are continually addreſſing themſelves to Angels, and to real or fictitious Saints, inſtead of directing their Prayers to God in the Name and through the Interceſſion of Him, who is our alone Mediator and Advocate with the Father, even our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*: All which Practices, are only ſo many different ſpecies of Idolatry: And upon account of Theſe things it is, that, in the prophetick Writings of the *New Teſtament*, ſome part of that which takes upon itſelf the Name of the *Chriſtian* World, is in very ſevere terms called *Babylon*, and *ſpiritual Sodom*, the *Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth*. Andindeed, in the great and ſolemn Acts of Religion, every thing is, more or leſs, faulty in This kind, except worſhipping *Him* alone, who created the World by his Power, who redeemed Mankind by his *Son*, and ſanctifies all good perſons by his *Holy Spirit*.

The Application wherewith I ſhall conclude, ſhall be This *One* Inference, that, from all that has been ſaid, it clearly appears, that the *Works of the Devil*, ſo often mentioned in Scripture, are the *wilful and deliberate Sins* of *Men*: Not things worked *in* or *upon* men, by the proper efficiency or operation of any ſuperiour power; but things worked *by* men, by their *own Will and Choice*, agreeable to, in *imitation* of, and in compliance with the *Temptations* of, the Great Apoſtate from God and Goodneſs: *Works of the* Devil, not in the *natural* but in the *moral* ſenſe; Actions; in their own nature *wicked*, *impious*, *diabolical*. From whence it moſt evidently follows, that none of the things ſpoken in Scripture concerning the temptations of the Devil, are any *diminution*, but on the contrary they are *Aggravations* of the Guilt of Great Sins. Profane men, are Therefore declared to *be of their Father the Devil*, becauſe his *Luſts they* will *do*; they *will deliberately*, *obſtinately*, and *impenitently* do them.

SERMON

SERMON XXXVIII.

The Difference betwixt living after the Fleſh and after the Spirit.

ROM. viii. 13.

For if ye live after the Fleſh, ye ſhall die: But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the Deeds of the Body, ye ſhall live.

AS the whole *Natural* World, is divided into *Two* great Portions, of *Light* and *Darkneſs*; And as the Whole of what the *Senſitive* World perceives, may well be ranked under the *Two* general Heads of *Pleaſure* and *Pain*, of *Happineſs* and *Miſery*: So the whole *Rational* or *Moral* World, may very properly be diſtinguiſhed, under thoſe *Two* oppoſite and moſt important Characters, of *Good* and *Evil*. The *One* of theſe, is the Kingdom of *God*, the Kingdom of *Righteouſneſs*, the Kingdom of *Light*: The *Other* is, the Kingdom of *Satan*, the Power of *Darkneſs*, the Dominion of *Sin*, or the Prevailing of *Wickedneſs* among Men. The *One* of theſe, is the *Way* that leadeth unto *Life*; the *Way* of *Life* and

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SERM. XXXVIII. and *Happineſs eternal*: The *Other*, is the *Way* that leadeth to *Deſtruction*; the way of *Death* and *Miſery everlaſting*. The *proper* buſineſs, of *Reaſon*, and of *Religion*; the whole *intent* and *office*, the whole *end* and *deſign*, both of the *Light of Nature*, and of the *Goſpel of Chriſt*; is to teach men to *judge* and *diſtinguiſh* rightly, concerning this great and eſſential Difference of Things; to ſhow them the *Importance* of acting wiſely in this matter; and to warn them of the *Conſequences* of which ſoever part they take.

Anſwerable to this great *Diviſion of Things* in the World *without* us, there is naturally *within* every Man a correſpondent *diverſity* of inclinations, towards the two *contrary* Objects, towards Good and Evil. By the irreſiſtible evidence of *Reaſon*, and by the Native Amiableneſs of *Truth and Right*; by the additional Weight of the *Authority of God*, and the powerful *Motives of Religion*; a Man is of neceſſity obliged to *approve* what is *Good*, and ſtrongly invited to *act* in conformity to That Obligation. But becauſe *Happineſs* alſo is of neceſſity deſirable; and the Way to thoſe things, on which Mens preſent Happineſs depends, lies often through the forbidden paſſages of *unrighteous* Practices; hence there cannot but be alſo in Man, in all ſuch caſes, an *Inclination to Evil*; a Deſire to obtain the Pleaſure or the Profit, a Deſire to gratifie the Appetite or the Paſſion, though it cannot be gratified in Thoſe particular Circumſtances but by the doing what is *Evil*. This diverſity of Inclinations, by which a Man is drawn by different Motives at one and the ſame time towards oppoſite Objects; is what the Scripture thus deſcribes, *Gal.* v. 17; *The Fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit, and the Spirit againſt the Fleſh; And theſe are contrary the one to the other, ſo that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* Again, *Rom.* vii. 22.; *I delight in the law of God, after the inward man; but I ſee another law in my Members, warring againſt the law of my Mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of Sin.* By the ſollicitations therefore of different Motives, Men are continually drawn towards contrary Objects: And in determining rightly *which Object* to prefer, conſiſts the true Wiſdom and Happineſs of Man. For *no* perſon *can ſerve Two* oppoſite *Maſters*. He muſt of neceſſity either *love the One*, and *hate the Other*; or elſe he muſt adhere to that *Other*, and neglect the *firſt*. Rom. viii. 5, 7, 8; *They that are after the Fleſh, do mind the things of the Fleſh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. Becauſe the carnal mind, is enmity againſt God; for it is not ſubject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they that are in the Fleſh, cannot pleaſe God.* On the contrary; *Whoſoever is born of God*, (1 Joh. iii. 9,) *doth not* and *cannot commit Sin*; that is, *conſiſtently* with his *character* 'tis *impoſſible* he ſhould live a vicious life, *becauſe he is born of God*: For *they that are Chriſt's, have crucified the Fleſh, with the Affections and Luſts*: Gal. v. 24.

The *Conſequence* of mens Choice on *Either* part, in this great *Diviſion* of things; their chooſing to be led by the Law of *Appetite* and *Paſſion*, or by the Law of *Reaſon* and *Religion*; the *Conſequence* (I ſay) of their choice on *Either* part, is ſet forth to us in the words of my Text. *If ye live after the Fleſh, ye ſhall die: But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the Deeds of the Body, ye ſhall live.*

In the following Diſcourſe, I ſhall *1ſt* endeavour to ſhow more particularly and diſtinctly the Meaning of the words, *Fleſh* and *Spirit*; and upon what grounds they have come to be uſed in Scripture in ſo great a Latitude the Extent of Signification. *2dly*, I ſhall conſider *what* the Apoſtle here declares will be the *Conſequence* of Men's living to one or the other of theſe two contrary Principles of Action: In the *one* caſe, ſaith he, *ye ſhall live*; in the *other*, *ye ſhall die*. And *3dly*, I ſhall draw ſome uſeful *Inferences* from the Whole.

I. In the *Firſt* place, Man being by Nature compounded of *Body* and *Mind*, the one of theſe is naturally the ſeat of *Appetite*, the other of *Reaſon*. And Each of theſe Faculties, are eſſentially Good and Uſeful in their kind: *Appetites and Paſſions*, to *excite* and *move* Men to act; and *Reaſon*, to *direct* and *regulate* thoſe Actions; to *direct* Appetites and Paſſions to their proper *Objects*,

Objects, and to *reſtrain* them within their juſt and due *Bounds*. The *Brute* SERM. creatures, having no *Moral* capacities, no Faculties capable of being influenced by the Arguments of *Reaſon* and *Religion*; are and can be directed *merely* by *Bodily Appetite*, in every thing they do. *Men*, who have no regard to the conſiderations of *Reaſon and Religion*, do the *Same* thing; And, (with *This* difference only, that they act with a Conſciouſneſs of *Guilt and Folly*, which Beaſts do not,) *They* alſo are Brute Animals. *Theſe*, as St. *Jude* expreſſes it, (ver. 10,) are very apt to *ſpeak evil of the things which they know not; but what they know naturally as Brute Beaſts, in thoſe things they corrupt themſelves.* Or, according to St. *Peter*'s deſcription of them, 2 *Pet.* ii. 12, 19; *Theſe, as natural Brute Beaſts, made to be taken and deſtroyed, ſpeak evil of the things that they underſtand not*; but *are the Servants of corruption*, and *ſhall utterly periſh in their own corruption.* The *firſt* therefore, the *original* and moſt *obvious* Meaning of this phraſe in the Text, of *living after the Fleſh*; is the *literal* ſenſe: Mens living in a courſe of *Debauchery*, in the Practice of thoſe Sins of *Uncleanneſs*, which the Apoſtle ſays ought not ſo much as once to be *named* among Chriſtians. And then, on the contrary, the *mortifying through the Spirit the Deeds of the Body*, will ſignify the reſtraining and regulating the *Appetites of Senſe* by the Rules of Virtue and ſober *Reaſon*, which is the *governing Power* in the *Spirit* of a Man's *own Mind*, as he is a *rational* Creature; and by the Precepts of True *Religion*, which are the Dictates of the *Divine Spirit*, revealing to us the Laws and Will of *God*.

From this firſt, original, and literal ſignification of the words, *Fleſh* and *Spirit*; the ſame Terms have, by a very eaſy and natural figure of Speech, been extended to ſignify *All Vice* and *All Virtue* in *general*; as having their Root and Foundation, one in the prevailing of different *Paſſions and Deſires* over the Dictates of *Reaſon*, and the other in the Dominion of *Reaſon and Religion* over all the irregularities of *Deſires and Paſſions*. Every *Vice*, and every inſtance of *Wickedneſs*, of *whatever* kind it be; has its Foundation in *ſome unreaſonable Appetite* or *ungoverned Paſſion, warring againſt the Law of the Mind*. And therefore, living in the Practice of *Any Wickedneſs* whatſoever, in oppoſition to the *Reaſon* of a Man's *own Mind*, and to the *Precepts of Religion* delivered by the *Spirit of God*; is, in the language of my Text, *living after the Fleſh*, or, as 'tis expreſſed ver. 1*ſt* of this Chapter, *walking after the Fleſh*. And on the contrary in Good Men, with regard to the Practice of *All Virtue* in general; *the Body* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *is dead, becauſe of Sin; but the Spirit is Life, becauſe of Righteouſneſs*; ver. 10. The *Works of the Fleſh* therefore, in Scripture-language, are, not only *Adultery, Fornication, and Uncleanneſs*; but alſo, as St. *Paul* adds in the continuation of his Catalogue, *Gal.* v. 20; *Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Striſe, Seditions, Hereſies*, (that is, *worldly Factions* ſet up under pretence of *Religion*; For That is the Scripture-ſenſe of the word, *Hereſy*; to which term, the Church of *Rome* has in later Ages affixed a *ridiculous* ſignification, of which the Apoſtles could have no knowledge: All theſe things, I ſay, are by St. *Paul* expreſsly ſtiled, *Works of the Fleſh*: Alſo *Envyings, Murders, Drunkenneſs, Revellings, and ſuch like*; ver. 21: Nay further, even *Contention* likewiſe, and all *ſuperſtitious Inventions of men* in matters of *Religion*; as the ſame Apoſtle ſays concerning *Worſhippers of Angels*, that they are *vainly puffed up by their* Fleſhly *Mind*; Col. ii. 18. In like manner the *Fruit of the Spirit*, is, not only *Sobriety, Temperance, and Chaſtity*; but alſo, as the Apoſtle adds in the ſame place, ver. 22; *Love, joy, peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, faith, meekneſs. And againſt ſuch*, ſays he, *there is no law. And they that are Chriſt's*, that is, all good Chriſtians, *have crucified the Fleſh, with the affections and luſts*; That is, will effectually take care to avoid the Practice of every Vice, which is contrary to theſe Virtues or Fruits of the Spirit.

Further: Becauſe a great part of the *Jewiſh* Religion conſiſted in *external* Obſervances relating to the *Body*, in *meats and drinks and divers Waſhings, and* Carnal *Ordinances impoſed on them until the time of Reformation*, as the Apo-

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ſtle expreſſes it, *Heb.* ix. 10; and again, ch. vii. 16; *after the Law of a* Carnal *Commandment*: Whereas the *Goſpel of Chriſt* always lays the whole Streſs of Religion upon the Practice of thoſe *Moral* Virtues, whoſe Seat is in the *Heart and Soul*: Hence the Doctrine of thoſe Falſe Apoſtles, who in a contentious manner endeavoured to oblige *all Chriſtians* to obſerve the *Ceremonies* of the Law of *Moſes* as a moſt neceſſary part of Chriſtian Religion, is likewiſe by St. *Paul* ſtiled *The Fleſh*; in oppoſition to the *true* and *uncorrupted* Doctrine of *Chriſt*, which he ſtiles *The Spirit*. Thus *Gal.* iii. 3; *Are ye ſo fooliſh? Having begun in the* Spirit, *are ye now made perfect by the* Fleſh? That is; Can you be ſo weak as to think, that after you have embraced the Truth of Chriſt's *ſpiritual* Religion, you can become ſtill more perfect, by obſerving the *mere external Ceremonies* of the *Jewiſh* Law? And again, ch. v. 18; *If ye be led by the* Spirit, *ye are not under the Law*: That is, If ye have a right Underſtanding and a ſuitable Practice of *Chriſt*'s Holy Religion, in the courſe of a truly *virtuous and good life*; ye will be under no obligation from your profeſſion of the Goſpel, to obſerve the *rituals* of the *Jewiſh* Law, Nay, on the contrary, *if ye be circumciſed*, ſaith he, ver. 2; *Chriſt ſhall profit you nothing*. That is: If, after ye have been inſtructed in the Truth of the Goſpel of Chriſt, ye contentiouſly inſiſt upon the obſervation of *Jewiſh Ceremonies* as *neceſſary*, and depend on them as *efficacious* to Salvation; ye do vacate one of the main Ends and Deſigns of the Goſpel; and your Religion will certainly degenerate into a mere external *Formality*, which is but a *Work of the Fleſh*.

Having thus at large explained the Meaning of the words *Fleſh* and *Spirit*, and upon what Grounds they have come to be uſed in Scripture in ſo great a Latitude and Extent of Signification; I proceed now in the

II. *Second* place, to conſider, *what* the Apoſtle here declares will be the *Conſequence* of Mens living according to one or the other of theſe two contrary Principles of Action: In the *one* caſe, ſays he, ye *ſhall live*; in the *other*, *ye ſhall die*. *If ye live after the Fleſh*; that is, if ye live in a habit of groſs *Debauchery*, or in the practice of *Any other* known *Vice* whatſoever, (for *All Vices* are founded upon prevailing *Appetites* and *Paſſions*;) or if your *Religion* conſiſts merely in *outward Forms and Ceremonies*, or in matters of *Animoſity and Contention*, (for Theſe likewiſe are *Works of the Fleſh*;) then, ſays he, *ye ſhall die*. *But if you through the Spirit*, that is, by the Laws of *Reaſon* implanted in a Man's own *Spirit*, and by the Precepts of *Religion* dictated by God's *Spirit*, do *mortify the deeds of the Body*; then *ye ſhall live*. For, *to be carnally minded*, (ver. 6.) *is Death*; *but to be ſpiritually minded, is life and peace*. 'Tis ſo, originally, in the *natural Conſequences* of *things*; and 'tis much more ſo by the *conſtitution and appointment* of God. *For the Wages of Sin, is Death*; *but the Gift of God is eternal life, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord*.

Man was originally, in his *Nature*, created *Mortal*; but by the Grace of God, repreſented under the Emblem of a Tree of Life, he had a poſſibility of eſcaping *actual Death*. Upon the entrance of *Sin* into the World, Man became *abſolutely and neceſſarily* ſubject to that Death, which by his Obedience had before been in his Power to have avoided. By the interpoſition of Chriſt, God has again renewed the Promiſe of Immortality; But 'tis ſtill upon the condition of Man's renewing his Obedience. If Men continue in Sin, the Sentence of Death *remains* upon them; And the Conſequence of That, is the final Effect of the Divine Vengeance in the *Future* State. In the *Natural Tendency* of things, *ſome* Vices, even in the *preſent* time, lead directly and *literally* to *Death*; either by *Capital Puniſhments*, or by natural *Diſeaſes*. "She hath caſt down many wounded, *ſaith* Solomon *concerning a vicious Woman*, Prov. vii. 26, yea, many ſtrong men have been ſlain by her: Her "houſe is the way to Hell, going down to the Chambers of Death." And *All* Vices, by taking away the *rational* Uſes and the *rational* Comforts of Life, wherein *the life of Man conſiſteth*, the life of *Man* as diſtinguiſhed from that of

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the *Beaſts that periſh*; do bring every man, ſo far as they get the Dominion over him, into the State of That perſon, of whom St. *Paul* affirms, 1 *Tim.* v. 6; that *ſhe is dead while ſhe liveth.* By the *ſame Natural Conſequence* of things, in the *Future* State likewiſe, a vicious and corrupt mind *cannot* poſſibly *live unto God.* And what St. *Paul* ſays of *Fleſh and Blood* in the *natural* and *literal* Senſe of the words, as ſignifying a *mortal* perſon; is much more true in the *figurative* and *moral* ſenſe of them, as ſignifying a *vicious and debauched* perſon: "Fleſh and Blood *cannot* inherit the Kingdom of God, neither doth corruption "inherit incorruption. *But if it were poſſible, in the* Nature of Things; *yet,* "*by the righteous* Judgment of God, *'tis unalterably decreed, that* no *vicious* "*perſon ſhall* enter into *That* Life. *Gal.* vi. 7; Be not deceived, God is not "mocked; For whatſoever a man ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap. For he "that ſoweth to the Fleſh, ſhall of the Fleſh reap corruption; but he that "ſoweth to the Spirit, ſhall of the Spirit reap life everlaſting. *Again,* 1 *Cor.* "iii. 17; If any man defile the Temple of God, him ſhall God deſtroy: For "the Temple of God is Holy, which Temple Ye are. But *on the contrary* "*ſays he,* if the Spirit of him that raiſed up Jeſus from the dead, dwell in you; "*that is, if ye obey the Dictates of the Spirit of God, in the courſe of a* virtuous "*and* religious *life*; *then* he that raiſed up Chriſt from the dead, ſhall alſo "quicken your mortal Bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you; *Rom.* viii. 11.

III. It remains in the *Third* and *Laſt* place, that I conclude with a practical *Inference* or two, from what has been ſaid. And

1*ſt*; From the account which has been given of the Extent of the ſignification of theſe Phraſes, *living after the Fleſh* and *after the Spirit*; it appears that *All* perſons, of *all* ranks and conditions, in *All* ſtations and circumſtances of life whatſoever, are concerned in the Exhortation or Warning given in my Text. As *various* as are the *Appetites* and *Paſſions* of Mankind, which *all* have their Foundation in the *bodily* part *warring againſt the Law* or Reaſon *of the Mind*; ſo many *different* ways are there, of *living after the Fleſh.* Perſons in the *loweſt* ſtations of life, have uſually, from bad education and ill company, their *proper* Temptation to *Beaſtly Exceſſes and Debaucheries*; or, if they are under *extreme* Want and Oppreſſion, then their chief Temptation is to *Impatience* and *Murmuring* againſt God, or perhaps to *unrighteous* Methods of *relieving* their own Neceſſities. In the *higheſt* and moſt *exalted* Stations of life, the Temptations men are moſt *naturally* expoſed to, are thoſe of *Pride* and *Ambition*; of *Tyrannicalneſs*, or a Love of *Power and Dominion*; of *oppreſſive, haughty*, and *injurious* Treatment of Inferiours; of *Luxuriouſneſs* in life, joined with either a *total Thoughtfulneſs* or a *profane Deſpiſing and Contempt* of matters of *Religion.* In the *middle* rank and condition of life, the Sins that moſt *eaſily* and *generally* beſet men, are thoſe of *Fraud* and *Deceit*, of *unfairneſs* and *overreaching*, in all kinds of *Dealings* and *Contracts*: Alſo an aptneſs to run ignorantly and violently into *Parties* and *Factions* either *Civil* or *Religious*, with a Spirit of *Contentiouſneſs*, *Hatred*, and *Animoſity.* All things which are of one and the ſame kind, proceeding from one and the ſame Root under different Circumſtances; all of them, what the Apoſtle calls *Works of the Fleſh.* The Denunciations of the Wrath of God in Scripture, againſt thoſe who *walk after the Fleſh*; are indeed *primarily* and *chiefly* directed againſt ſuch, as live in the Practice of thoſe groſs Debaucheries, which are in the more *literal* ſenſe, the "works of the Fleſh. *Thus*, 2 Pet. ii. 9; The Lord knoweth how—— to re- "ſerve the unjuſt unto the day of judgment to be puniſhed; But *chiefly* them "that walk after the Fleſh, in the Luſt of Uncleanneſs. *And St.* Paul *exhorts*; "*ſpeaking concerning the ſame kind of Sins*; Eph. v. 6. Let no man deceive you "with vain words; for becauſe of theſe things cometh the wrath of God upon "the Children of Diſobedience; *or upon* Unbelievers, *even in the* Heathen "*World.*" But though Theſe Sins are ranked *firſt* in the catalogue of thoſe which certainly exclude from the Kingdom of God; yet all *other* Vices alſo do follow in the ſame catalogue; and are really (as has been ſhown in the foregoing Diſcourſe) *Works* likewiſe *of the Fleſh.* So that it was of no avail to the

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proud and *hypocritical* Phariſee, to ſay; *God, I thank thee, that I am not, as other Men are,——adulterers*, and ſo on; *Luke* xviii. 11. For as St. *James* expreſſes it, ch. ii. 11; *If thou commit no Adultery, yet if thou kill*, if thou liveſt in the practice of any *other* known vice, *thou art become a Tranſgreſſor of the Law.*

2*dly*, From what has been ſaid concerning theſe Two great and general Principles of Action, the *Fleſh* and the *Spirit*; 'tis eaſy for every man to make a right judgment concerning his *own* preſent ſpiritual eſtate, under *which* of theſe *two* denominations he finds himſelf. Of *Other* mens Actions, whether they proceed from a *good* or an *evil* Principle; except in the caſe of notorious Vices, he may very eaſily judge amiſs. But concerning *himſelf*, if a man ſeriouſly conſiders, he cannot but know, whether he is governed in general by Conſiderations of *Reaſon* and *Religion*, or by mere *Appetites*, *Paſſions* and *Intereſts*: Whether he walks after the *Fleſh*, and ſhall die; or after the *Spirit*, and ſhall live.

SERMON

SERMON XXXIX.

Of the Sin of Profaneneſs.

HEB. xii. 16, 17.

Leſt there be any Fornicator, *or profane Perſon as Eſau, who for one Morſel of Meat ſold his Birthright: For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the Bleſſing, he was rejected; for he found no place of Repentance, tho' he ſought it carefully with Tears.*

THESE words naturally ſuggeſt unto us the following uſeful Subjects, for our Meditation. *1ſt*, That 'tis a true and juſt Character of *All Sinners*, that for one Morſel of Meat they ſell their Birthright: For the compariſon here made by the Apoſtle, between *Fornicators* and Other *profane* Perſons, and the Behaviour of *Eſau*; is not a repreſentation of their likeneſs in *the particulars* of their *Sin*, but in the *general* notion of their *Folly*. *2dly*, That thoſe kinds of Sins, which are more properly and ſtrictly comprehended under the Name of *Debauchery*; are of equal Malignity, and do equally provoke the Divine Diſpleaſure as Sins of *profaneneſs*; For thus they are joined together in the Text, *Any Fornicator, or profane perſon as Eſau*. *3dly*, That *Repentance*, ſooner or later, effectual or ineffectual, muſt of Neceſſity, always be the *Conſequence* of *Sin*: *Eſau* ſought

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ſought a place of Repentance. *4thly* and *laſtly*, That they who incorrigibly go on in a courſe of Wickedneſs, ought to be perpetually admoniſhed of their Danger, leſt That Repentance which they Now ſo careleſsly put off, come upon them Hereafter when it will be too late to be accepted: "Ye know that "afterward, when he would have inherited the Bleſſing, he was rejected; for "he found no place of Repentance, though he ſought it carefully with Tears.

I. The *Firſt* Obſervation naturally ariſing from the Text, is; that it is a true and juſt Character of *All Sinners*, that for one Morſel of Meat they ſell their *Birth-right*. *God* has by wiſe men, in all Ages, been very properly and ſignificantly ſtiled, *The* Father *of the Univerſe:* And the Uſage of Scripture recommends, and confirms the propriety of That expreſſion. There is, *One God and* Father *of All*, Eph. iv. 6; *Of whom, the whole* Family *in Heaven and Earth is named*; ch. iii. 15. The whole *World*, is the *Houſe* and *Family* of *God:* And in this great Family of the Univerſe, Good *Angels* and Good *Men* are, by way of eminence, ſtiled the Sons *of God*, and his *Firſt-born*; Heb. xii. 22; "Ye are "come— unto the City of the Living God,— to an innumerable Company "of Angels, to the general Aſſembly and Church of the *Firſt-born* that are "written Heaven, and to God the Judge of All." The Kingdom of Heaven, is the general Aſſembly and Church of the *Firſt-born*; and the inheritance of That Kingdom, is the *Birth-right* of the *Sons of God*. They are *Heirs of God, and Joint-Heirs with Chriſt*; Rom. viii. 17. There is a Treaſure, a Portion, laid up for righteous and good men in the Kingdom of their Father; which is the *Birth-right*, or *the Inheritance, of the Saints in Light*, Col. i. 12. And they who by a Life of Virtue and true Holineſs, are meet to be partakers of this "inheritance among them who are ſanctified, *are already, even during* "*their continuance here upon Earth*, no more Strangers and Foreigners, but "Fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the *Houſhold* of God; *Eph.* ii. 19. "*This* Birth-right, *this Claim of Inheritance, this Right* to the Tree of Life, "(*as St.* John *elegantly ſtiles it*, Rev. xxii. 14; Bleſſed are they that do his "commandments, that they may have *Right* to the Tree of Life, and may en-"ter in through the gates into the City;)" This *Birth-right*, I ſay, is *ſold*, is voluntarily parted with, by all Wicked men; and 'tis for *one Morſel of Meat* they ſell it. For a *preſent* inconſiderable *Trifle*, they part with a moſt valuable *Eſtate* in *reverſion:* For the *momentary* Pleaſures of Sin in this tranſitory and uncertain World, they exchange their heavenly and *eternal* Portion in the City of the Living God. Our Saviour in the Goſpel, by a moſt lively ſimilitude, compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a *Pearl of great Price* hid in a Field, which when a man had found, immediately he went and ſold all that he had, and purchaſed That Field. The *Reverſe* of This, is the Caſe of all impenitent Sinners: The *ineſtimable Pearl* which is in their hands, they careleſsly ſell for *For that which profiteth not*. By *many* moving Deſcriptions, is the Greatneſs of this *Folly* ſet forth to us in Scripture; in order to prevail with us, to *become wiſe unto Salvation*. By the *ſimilitude* of the *Prodigal Son*, Luke xv; who left his Father's houſe, where he might have "been ever with him, *and* all that he "had was His; *and* ſpent *his* portion of Goods, *and brought himſelf to Po-*"*verty in a foreign Country, till* he would fain have filled his Belly with the "Husks that the Swine did eat, and no man gave unto him." By the *Example* of our firſt Parent *Adam*; who when, in the garden of God, he had free leave to eat to the full, of all the Trees in that goodly Paradiſe, except One only forbidden Fruit, reſerved as an inſtance of Homage of his Maker; for the gratification of One forbidden Deſire, he ventured to exclude himſelf from the Tree of Life, and from his whole Poſſeſſion in the Paradiſe of God. But laſtly; By *no inſtance* is the true caſe of Sinners more lively and affectionately ſet forth to us in Scripture, than by That of *Eſau* in the Text, who careleſsly and preſumptuouſly, unthankfully and profanely, *for One Morſel of Meat ſold his Birth-right*. In the Book of *Geneſis* we read, ch. xxv. 32, that *Eſau*, coming out of the Field *faint* and *weary* from hunting, makes *This Apology* for himſelf upon ſelling his Birth-right for a Morſel of Meat; *Behold*, ſays he, *I am at the*

χρύσια χαλκείων.

Point

Point to die, and what profit ſhall this Birth-right do me? Had this been really and literally the *Truth* of his caſe; it had been a circumſtance of juſt Piety, and of great Excuſe. But from the *whole* of the Hiſtory it plainly appears, that this was, not a *ſerious*, but a *looſe* and *profane* expreſſion. He comes home faint and weary out of the Field from his Sports; and, in bargaining for his Birth-right, to which were annexed ſome ſpecial Promiſes of God and the Bleſſings of his Father *Iſaac*, he complains in a *ſcoffing* and *contemptuous*, not in a *ſerious* manner, that he was *ready to be ſtarved*. This appears plainly from the *laſt* verſe of That chapter; where we find that after he had ſold his Birth-right, he went away careleſs and unconcerned at what he had done: *He did eat and drink*, ſays the Text; *and roſe up, and went his way*; *Thus Eſau* deſpiſed *his Birth-right*. The word, *deſpiſed*, in the *Original* of this Text in *Geneſis*, is a word implying *Profane Contempt:* And from thence the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews*, in the words of my Text, ſpeaks comparatively of Profane Perſons *as Eſau, who for one Morſel of Meat ſold his Birth-right*. Now *This* being the caſe; *Who* is there among us, that will not preſently be apt to reply with the *Jews* in the Goſpel, *Had We lived in the days of our Fathers*, theſe things ſhould not have happened unto us? Had *We* been in the caſe of *Eſau*, or of our Foreſather *Adam*, we would not for one Morſel of Meat have ſold our Birth-right, or, for the Taſte of One pleaſant forbidden Fruit, have forfeited our whole Poſſeſſion in the Paradiſe of God? It is very natural, for unthinking Sinners, thus to reply; and, with the *Phariſees* in ſeveral of our Saviour's Parables, very zealouſly and with great readineſs, under the *Perſon of Another* to condemn *Themſelves*. They wonder, and think it hardly poſſible, that men ſhould err ſo greatly, as their Fore-fathers are in Scripture recorded to have done. But what if the very ſame thing is ſtill done among us every day? What if the true intent, and the juſt and proper application of the Scripture-hiſtories before us, be no other than This; *Thou* thyſelf *art the Man:* Thou, that wondereſt and art aſtoniſhed at the Hiſtory of *Eſau*, and canſt not conceive how any man ſhould be ſo ſtupidly careleſs; thou art thyſelf the *Eſau* whom the Scripture here meaneth, who art *Now* for *one Morſel* of Meat *ſelling thy Birth-right?* Thou, who canſt ſcarcely think it credible, that thy Fore-father *Adam* could poſſibly be ſo weak, as, for the ſake of One forbidden Fruit, to forfeit his Right for ever to the Tree of Life; what if Thou *thyſelf* art the *Adam* whom the Scripture points at, who art *Now* for the momentary pleaſures of Sin, excluding thyſelf from the eternal Paradiſe of God? For it is certain, all theſe things *happened unto Them* of old, *for Examples; and they are written for Our Admonition, upon whom the Ends of the World are come*; 1 Cor. x. 11. The Father hath freely beſtowed ſuch Love upon us, that we ſhould be called the *Sons of God:* And the *Birth-right* of the Sons of God, is an *inheritance that fadeth not away* in their Father's houſe, even in the eternal Kingdom of Heaven. Into this City of God, there ſhall in no wiſe enter any thing that defileth; nothing that is impure or corrupt, nothing that is unrighteous, nothing that loves a Lie or promotes any Deceit, nothing that is uncharitable, inſolent, or tyrannical. What then is it elſe, but, in the trueſt and ſadeſt ſenſe, *ſelling our Birth-right for One Morſel of Meat*; to part with our *eternal* Portion in the Kingdom of our Father, for the *preſent momentary* enjoyments of Sin? For the unmanly Pleaſures of Debauchery? For the unprofitable Gains, of Fraud and Injuſtice? for the unreaſonable and baſe Satisfaction, of tyrannizing, domineering, and uncharitably impoſing upon our Brethren, for a very ſhort Seaſon? For, what is our Life, at moſt, but as a *Flower* of *the Graſs* that ſpeedily *fadeth*; or as a *thin vapour*, that *paſſeth away*, and *cometh not again?* or, as it is elegantly expreſſed by the Author of the Book of *Wiſdom*, ſpeaking in the Perſon of wicked men who had died in their Sins, ch. v. 9; "All thoſe "things are paſſed away like a Shadow, and as a Poſt that haſted by; And as a "Ship that paſſeth over the Waves of the Water, which when it is gone by, "the trace thereof cannot be found;——Or as when a Bird has flown through "the Air, there is no Token of her way to be found;——Even ſo *We* in like "manner, as ſoon as we were born, began to draw to our End, and had no

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1 Pet. i. 24. Jam. iv. 14.

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" ſign of Virtue to ſhow, but were conſumed in our own Wickedneſs." This is the *Firſt Obſervable* from the Text; that it is a true and juſt Character of *All Sinners*, that for *One Morſel of Meat they ſell their Birth-right:* For the compariſon here made by the Apoſtle between the Behaviour of *Eſau*, and That of *Other profane* perſons; is not a repreſentation of their Likeneſs in the *particulars* of their *Sin*, but in the *general* Notion of their *Folly*.

II. The *Second* Obſervation naturally ariſing from the words of the Text, is; that thoſe *kinds* of Sins, which are more properly and ſtrictly comprehended under the Name of *Debauchery*; are of equal *Malignity*, and do equally provoke the Divine Diſpleaſure, as Sins of *Profaneneſs:* For thus they are joined together in the Text, *Leſt there be Any* Fornicator, *or* Profane *perſon as* Eſau. God, is a Being of infinite Purity and Holineſs; and there ſhall in no caſe enter into his Kingdom, any thing that defileth, any thing impure and unholy, any thing that worketh Abomination. The Sins of This kind, need not to be particularly mentioned, and indeed ought not to be at all ſo much as named among Chriſtians. Our Profeſſion indiſpenſably requires of us, that we preſent ourſelves, our Souls and *Bodies*, a *living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reaſonable Service*; Rom. xii. 1. And the ſame Apoſtle, who tells us, that *Pure Religion and undefiled, before God even the Father, is this, to viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their Affliction*, Jam. i. 27; adds in the very ſame verſe, that it is alſo an equally eſſential part of the ſame Religion, that a man *keep himſelf unſpotted from the World*; that he preſerve himſelf free, from the defilement and corruptions, of a vicious and debauched Age. Some men, who ſeem to *hate* the Vices of Oppreſſion and Violence, of Arbitrarineſs and Tyranny; flatter themſelves that God will not be ſevere with them in judgment, for the *leſs ill-natured Sins* (as they are apt to repreſent them to Themſelves) of Pleaſure and Debauchery. But God who is *of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*, will puniſh *Iniquity of* all kinds: And He who hath ſaid unto us, under pain of his final Diſpleaſure, *Do not kill*; hath likewiſe ſaid unto us, under the ſame Penalty, *Do not commit Adultery*. Of *All* Sins, the moſt *literal* and *formal* Apoſtacy from God, is *Idolatry:* But *in effect*, Stubbornneſs and wilful incorrigibleneſs in the Practice of *Any* Sin, is of the ſame Malignity as *Iniquity and Idolatry*, 1 *Sam.* xv. 23; *Rebellion* againſt God, in *Any* great Inſtance, *is as the Sin of Witchcraft*; and *Stubbornneſs* in *Any* known Crime, *is as the Iniquity of Idolatry*. Whatever alienates a man's Heart from God and Goodneſs, and fixes it upon a wrong and forbidden Object; makes him to become what the Scripture, in a *ſpiritual* ſenſe, calls an *Idolater*. *Covetouſneſs*, ſaith St. *Paul, is Idolatry*; Col. iii. 5. And being ſubject to the Dominion of Any unlawful *Pleaſure*, as well as to the Love of unjuſt *Gain*; is, in the *ſame* ſenſe, *worſhipping an Idol*. Indeed, there is *nothing* that *more* alienates the Mind from God; that more darkens the Underſtanding, and depraves the Will; that tends more to make a man's Temper baſe and vile, to deprive him of all Senſe of Virtue here, and unfit him for the State of Heaven hereafter; than a Habit of Senſuality, and the Practice of ſuch Vices, as do after a peculiar manner (in St. *Peter's* language) " war againſt the Soul: 1 *Pet.* ii. 11; Dearly beloved, I beſeech you " as Strangers and Pilgrims, abſtain from fleſhly luſts which *war againſt the Soul.* " *They* war againſt the Soul; *by making it* void of Underſtanding, *void of all* true " Senſe of Spiritual matters, *void of all* Hope towards God; *Prov.* vii. 27; " Her houſe is the way to Hell, going down to the Chambers of Death. *The* " *Obſervation is true*, in general: *But concerning* Chriſtians, *it is more* particularly *affirmed, that* God has called *us* to Holineſs; *and that he* ſanctifies *us by* " *his* Holy Spirit *dwelling in us. Which Holy Spirit, the Author of the Book* " *of* Wiſdom *well obſerves, ch.* i. 4, will not dwell in the Body that is ſubject " unto Sin. *And St.* Paul *ſtrongly urges the ſame Argument*, 1 Cor. iii. 16; " Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God " dwelleth in you? If any man defile the Temple of God, (*in the Original it* " *is very elegantly*, if any man *deſtroy* the Temple of God,) him ſhall God de- " ſtroy; For the Temple of God is Holy, which Temple ye are." For This Reaſon;

Reaſon; of all the Puniſhments which God has at different times inflicted upon Sinners, there are none recorded in Scripture as having been more *exemplary*, than thoſe inflicted upon account of Sins of *Debauchery*. " 1 Cor. x. 8. Neither " let Us commit Fornication, as ſome of Them committed, and fell in One day " three and twenty thouſand. *And* Jude 7, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the Ci- " ties about them in like manner, giving themſelves over to Fornication,—— " are ſet forth for an example, ſuffering the Vengeance of eternal Fire." And in all the Catalogues of Sins mentioned in the *New Teſtament*, againſt which the *ſevereſt* of Threatnings are denounced, theſe Inſtances of Debauchery are always ſet down in the very firſt rank. " 1 Cor. vi. 9; Know ye not that the Un- " righteous ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither " Fornicators, nor Idolaters, *and ſo on*, ſhall inherit the Kingdom of God. " *Again*, Gal. v. 19; The works of the Fleſh are manifeſt, which are theſe, A- " dultery, Fornication, *and the like*; of the which I tell you before, as I have " alſo told you in time paſt, that they which do ſuch things, ſhall not inherit " the Kingdom of God. *And* Eph. v. 5; For this ye know, that no Whore- " monger nor unclean perſon,——hath any inheritance in the Kingdom of Chriſt " and of God: Let no man deceive you with vain words; For becauſe of theſe " things cometh the Wrath of God upon the children of Diſobedience:" In the Original it is, *upon the children of Unbelief*; That is; *Theſe very Vices* are the Great and Principal Cauſe, of God's wrath falling upon the *Heathen-world*: How much *more* vain then and unreaſonable is it to imagine, that they can poſſibly admit of Any Excuſe among *Chriſtians!* Laſtly, in *Rev.* xxi. 5, 8; *God*, even *the Father, himſelf in perſon*, is repreſented as declaring in the moſt ſolemn and awful manner; " He that ſat upon the Throne, ſaid,——The Fearful, and " Unbelieving, and the Abominable, and Murderers, and Whoremongers, and " Sorcerers, and Idolaters, and All Liars, ſhall have their part in the Lake that " burneth with Fire and Brimſtone; which is the Second Death. *In* which, " *and in ſome* Other *of the fore-going Paſſages, it is remarkable that Sins of* Pro- " faneneſs *and of* Senſuality, *are* joined together *in like manner as in the words* " *of the Text*; Leſt there be Any Fornicator, or Profane Perſon as *Eſau*.

III. The *Third* Obſervation I would draw from the Text, is; that *Repentance*, ſooner or later, effectual or ineffectual, muſt of Neceſſity always be the Conſequence of Sin. *Eſau* ſought, a *place of Repentance*; and he ſought it *careſully with Tears*. All the Pleaſures of Sin, are Vanity and Diſappointment: They are contrary to Nature, contrary to Reaſon, contrary to the Wiſe Conſtitution and Appointment of God. Sooner or later, the True Nature of Things *will* diſcover itſelf, and all Paints and Falſe Colours will be wiped off: Whenever This is the caſe; Repentance neceſſarily ſucceeds, conſequently and of Courſe. *Sometimes early*, by the Grace of God; working upon men through ſerious Conſideration, and Attention to Truth and Reaſon: And then their Repentance becomes effectual, bringing forth the Fruits of Amendment and Reformation of Life. But if not ſo; yet *finally* at leaſt, and by the *neceſſary nature of Things* Then, when they would *inherit the Bleſſing* and *are rejected*, the very worſt of men muſt needs be brought to *Repentance*; to a Repentance, *not* which is a *Virtue*, or of any *Effect* (for it is *Neceſſary then*, and altogether *unavoidable*,) but they are brought to *ſuch* a Repentance, as is a *Paſſion* only, and a proper Part of their *Puniſhment itſelf*. The State of ſuch Perſons, is moſt elegantly deſcribed by the Author of the Book of *Wiſdom*; ch. i. 20; " When " they caſt up the Accounts of their Sins, they ſhall come with fear, *that is*, " *ſhall appear in deſpair before God in judgment*, and their own iniquities ſhall " convince them to their Face:——And they repenting and groaning for An- " guiſh of Spirit, ſhall ſay within themſelves;——We have erred from the way " of Truth, and the Light of Righteouſneſs hath not ſhined unto us:——For " the Hope of the Ungodly is like duſt that is blown away with the Wind; " like a thin froth that is driven away with the Storm; like as the ſmoke which " is diſperſed here and there with a Tempeſt, and paſſeth away as the remem- " brance of a Gueſt that tarrieth but a Day. *And This brings me to the*

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IV. *Fourth* and *Last* Particular, observable from the Text; *viz.* that they who incorrigibly go on in a Course of Wickedness, ought to be perpetually admonished of their Danger; least That Repentance which they Now so carelessly put off, come upon them Hereafter when it will be too late to be accepted: "Ye know that afterward, when he would have inherited the Blessing, he was "rejected; for he found no place of Repentance, though he sought it carefully "with Tears. *What is here affirmed of* Esau, *that he* found no place of Repentance, "though he sought it carefully with Tears;" does not signify, (as *some* have imagined,) that he could not *repent*: For indeed he *could not* but *repent*, in the case he was Now in: But the Meaning plainly is, that his *Repentance* being only the *Sorrow* of Repentance, and not a true *Amendment of Mind*; a *Repentance* coming upon him, at the time when the *Blessing* was to be distributed, and not when his Duty was to be performed; for That Reason it found no means of being *Accepted*. As, in other places of Scripture, God's giving *men Repentance*, or granting *them Repentance unto life*, does not signify God's causing *them to repent*, but his accepting *their Repentance*, or *allowing* it to *become available for their Pardon*; so here, a man's *finding* or *not finding* any place of Repentance, does not mean his being *able* or *not able* to *repent*; (for indeed no man can *help* repenting, when it is too late;) but it means evidently his *finding*, or *not finding*, *Acceptance*. *Esau*, when he would have inherited the Blessing, *was rejected*; he was rejected, *notwithstanding* his Repentance and his Tears. And This Example is urged by the Apostle, as a Warning or Admonition to *All Wicked men*, that they amend their Lives while there is yet *time* and *space* to *perform* their *Duty*; least afterwards, when they shall *desire* to inherit the Blessing, (at the day of judgment *certainly*, upon their Death-bed *very probably*,) their Repentance and their Tears prove ineffectual. Our Saviour, in his Parable of the five foolish Virgins, *Matt.* xxv,; and again in his Discourse, *Luk.* xiii. 25, gives us the very same Warning: *When once*, says he, *the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are.* The *Jews in the Wilderness*, who *refused* to enter into the promised land, 'till God had sworn they should *not*; and then they became *desirous* to enter in, and were not permitted; are a lively emblem of the same Truth; as it is cited and at large applied, in this very Epistle, to That purpose. And the exclamation of *Wisdom* in the first chapter of the *Proverbs*, is most appolite to the same Subject: ver. 24; *Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;—I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your Fear cometh;—Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.* The meaning of all which passages is, not that it is ever too late in This life, for men to repent and really *Amend* and be forgiven; but that all who delay, are in continual and very great Danger, lest Sickness, and Death, and Judgment, and the Time of distributing the Blessing, overtake them; and Then, when they shall earnestly *desire to inherit the Blessing, they shall be rejected, and shall find no place of Repentance, though they seek it carefully with Tears.*

SERMON

SERMON XL.

Againſt profaning the Name of GOD.

LEVIT. xix. 12.

Ye ſhall not ſwear by my Name falſely, neither ſhalt thou profane the Name of thy God: I am the Lord.

A TRULY religious perſon, as he glorifies God in all his *Actions*, and obeys him in the courſe of a virtuous Life; ſo even upon his *Words* alſo he ſets a conſtant guard; and keeps the door of his Lips, that he offend not with his Tongue. *Out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth ſpeaketh*; and from a man's behaviour in the Freedoms of common unguarded converſation, may his true Senſe of Religion and his Regard to the Honour of God better be judged of, than from any thing that can be diſcerned in his more reſtrained carriage at the ſolemn Offices of religious Worſhip; where Regard to Appearances of Decency and Cuſtom, often cauſes Hypocrites to make a greater Show of earneſt Devotion, than thoſe who live all the day long in the Fear of God, and under a conſtant Senſe of the Obligations of Religion. By the habitual Temper and Diſpoſition of a man's mind in the general courſe of his Life, is the true judgment of

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every one's character to be made; and this habitual Temper *moſt* appears in mens freeſt and unreſerved Converſation. *A good man*, ſaith our Saviour, *out of the good Treaſure of the Heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treaſure, bringeth forth evil things*; Matt. xii. 35. Which words, plainly lead to the true explication of thoſe more difficult ones which follow, ver. 36; *I ſay unto you, that every* idle *word*, (that is, according to the nature of the *Jews* language, every *wicked* or every *profane* word,) *that men ſhall ſpeak; they ſhall give account thereof in the day of Judgment*; *For by thy* words *thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy* words *thou ſhalt be condemned*. The Reaſon is, becauſe (as he had before obſerved) *out of the abundance of the* Heart *the Mouth ſpeaketh*, and a man's *converſation* is the Effect of the Temper of his *Mind*. For this Cauſe the Apoſtle exhorts, *Col.* iv. 6; *Let your Speech be always with Grace. With Grace*; that is, ſuch as is *decent for Chriſtians*, who are partakers of the Grace of God. *And whatever ye do in* word *or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jeſus*; that is, in ſuch manner as is anſwerable to your Holy Profeſſion, in ſuch manner as becomes the Diſciples of Chriſt. There is in the Mouths of wiſe and religious men, even when they are *not* ſpeaking of religious matters; but in the common Affairs and Buſineſs of the World, nay even in the moſt cheerful freedoms of innocent Diverſions, there is habitually a *ſound ſpeech which cannot be condemned*: Tit. ii. 8. To be indeed always in this matter exactly upon the guard, is *very difficult*; nay perhaps *impoſſible*, except to ſuch, who by good Habit have made it *natural* to themſelves to do what is right, ſo that it is a ſort of Violence and a Force to them to tranſgreſs in this Kind. He that *offendeth not in* word, ſaith St. *James*, *the ſame is a perfect man*; ch. iii. 2. But alaſs! there are too many among Chriſtians, as there were of old among the *Jews*, ſo much more *notoriouſly* and in ſo much *higher* Inſtances Tranſgreſſors in this kind, as to make needful the Prohibition given in the Text, *Ye ſhall not ſwear by my Name falſely, neither ſhalt thou profane the Name of thy God: I am the Lord.*

In diſcourſing upon which words, I ſhall *firſt* explain the *Terms*, what is meant by the *Name of God*, and what by *profaning* or *ſwearing by it falſely*. *Secondly*, I ſhall conſider the *nature* of the *ſeveral Vices*, included in this prohibition. And *Thirdly*, I ſhall take Notice of the *Argument* here brought to *inforce* the prohibition, *I am the Lord.*

I. *Firſt*; As to the Signification of the Terms, *Thou ſhalt not profane the* Name *of thy God*; it is to be obſerved that this Phraſe, *the* Name *of God*, ſignifies in Scripture, according to the nature of the *Hebrew* language, *God himſelf*. A principal part of whoſe Worſhip it is, to bear always in our minds and expreſs always in our behaviour a juſt Awe and Veneration for him as the Supreme Governour of all things, and a proportionable honour for whatever has relation to his Service. The firſt Petition, with which our Lord directs us to begin our daily Prayer, is, that the Name of God may be *Hallowed* or *Sanctified*; that is, that the *Knowledge* and *Worſhip* of the True God may prevail continually more and more in the World. Which Petition whoever puts up with Sincerity and Underſtanding, and not in mere Form; muſt of neceſſity, and in all conſiſtent Conſequence, judge, that the God whom alone we worſhip in the *publick* Solemnity, Him alſo we are no leſs obliged to have a continual Regard to in all the *private* and *common* actions of Life. A *Regard*, not formal and affected, not ſuperſtitious and troubleſome, not ſcrupulous and preciſe; but an habitual, an eaſy, an unperceived Regard; ſuch as men bear towards a Governour whom they eſteem and love, and whoſe Honour they are continually promoting, even in *common* actions, where neither Others nor perhaps themſelves at that Inſtant perceive any *actual* Attention of mind to That particular End. Habitual Reverence towards God, is the great Foundation of Religion, and in whomſoever it is found, 'twill always have an influence upon the whole Life and Converſation, as well as upon the more ſolemn Acts of Devotion. The *Ancient Jews*, whenever mention was made of *God*, uſed always to add, *whoſe Name be bleſſed*; and Expreſſions of the like kind, are frequently found in

in the *Apoſtles* Writings. The *Modern Jews* have run this matter into a great and very ſuperſtitious Extreme, of *never naming the Name of God at all.* In oppoſition to which, (as all Extremes are apt to produce each other,) Chriſtians of latter Ages have, to the higheſt degree of Careleſsneſs, allowed themſelves to talk and diſpute about God with all the Slightneſs and Irreverence, and with ſuch abſolute Unconcernedneſs, as if he were a Being to whom they had no relation, and on whom they had no dependance. In which matter, the more decent Behaviour even of the *Mahometans* whom we deſpiſe, may juſtly be a Reproach to us; and teach us to take heed, that in trivial and common Converſation, we be not found too often *profaning the Name of God*, and inſenſibly diminiſhing that great Guard of Religion, the due Senſe men ought to have of God upon their Minds.

Ye *ſhall not ſwear by my Name* falſely. The word which we here render, *falſely*; is of the ſame import, with That which in the third Commandment, *Exod.* xx; is expreſſed by the phraſe, *in vain.* From whence we are to obſerve in general, that the words *Falſehood* and *Vanity*, are in Scripture-language uſed promiſcuouſly, as meaning One and the ſame Thing. Thus *Idols*, becauſe they are really nothing in the World, nothing in the religious Senſe, nothing of what they are pretended to be; are frequently ſtiled *Vanities*, and *lying Vanities*; *Falſehoods*, *Gods which by nature are no Gods*; Gods which in reality have *no Being*; or (which is the ſame thing) have none of That *Power, Dominion and Authority*, which would conſtitute them Gods. In like manner, *ſwearing by the Name of God* falſely, as 'tis expreſſed in the Text; or, *taking the Name of God* in vain, as it is expreſſed in the xx*th* of *Exodus*; or, profaning *the Name of God*, as 'tis again expreſſed in the latter part of the Text; are all of them Phraſes, denoting one and the ſame Kind of Sin; and, in every prohibition, muſt be underſtood to extend to ſeveral Vices of the ſame Nature and Sort, differing in their reſpective Circumſtances and Degrees. *What* the *particular Vices* are, included in the preſent prohibition in the Text; was the

II. *Second* general head I propoſed to treat of. And

1*ſt*; The higheſt and moſt preſumptuous degree of *profaning the Name of God*, is *Perjury*; when a man ſolemnly calls God to witneſs to the Truth of That, which he either *knows* to be *Falſe*, or does *not know* to be *True*. This is a Crime of ſo high a nature, that no man *can poſſibly* be guilty of it, who has any Senſe at all of Religion remaining upon his Mind. For he who knowingly and deliberately calls God to witneſs to a *Falſehood*, in order to deceive or wrong his Neighbour; does openly diſclaim the Mercies of God, and challenges the Almighty to ſhow him no Favour. But though none but a profeſſed Atheiſt, can thus avowedly and directly invoke the Diſpleaſure of the moſt High, and ſolemnly bid defiance to the Power of the Divine Wrath; yet there is *too* frequently, even in thoſe who are not altogether deſtitute of Religion, a careleſsneſs and want of attention, or an aptneſs to deceive themſelves with vain and groundleſs diſtinctions, which tend much to diminiſh the *Solemnity* of appealing to the righteous judgment of God, and the Sacredneſs of invoking that great and tremendous Name. Serious and conſiderate Perſons cannot but wiſh, either that Oaths were leſs frequently adminiſtred; or that it might always be done with greater Solemnity, ſo as to put men upon conſidering in earneſt what they are about.

2*dly*, The next degree of *profaning the Name of God*, is that *indecent* as well as wicked Cuſtom of *raſh ſwearing in common Converſation.* Of which Sin, the firſt Aggravation is, that they who are guilty of it, are in perpetual danger of the Crime of *Perjury*. For he who uſes himſelf to ſwear frequently and habitually, will never attend carefully, that, what he ſwears to, be *True*. Nay, 'tis too juſt an Obſervation, that they who are accuſtomed to this Vice at all, are *then* apt to be *moſt* guilty of it, when they are *moſt provoked*, and *moſt ſuſpicious* that what they affirm, is not credible. This Argument is well urged by the Son of *Sirach*; *Eccluſ.* xxiii. 9; *Accuſtom not thy mouth to ſwearing, neither uſe thyſelf to the naming of the Holy One. For as a Servant that is continually*

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beaten; ſhall not be without a blue mark; ſo he that ſweareth, and nameth God continually, ſhall not be faultleſs. A man that uſeth much Swearing, ſhall be filled with iniquity; and the Plague ſhall never depart from his houſe. If he ſhall offend, (that is, fall into Perjury,) *his Sin ſhall be upon him; and if he acknowledge not his Sin, he maketh a* double *Offence; and if he ſwear in vain,* (that is, falſely,) *he ſhall not be innocent, but his Houſe ſhall be full of Calamities.* But if the danger of Perjury *could* certainly be avoided, (as it never can be by habitual Swearers;) yet to call upon God perpetually, as a witneſs to mean and trivial matters; is manifeſt want of *Reverence*, and want of a juſt Senſe of God and Religion. And *This* Fault is the more inexcuſable, becauſe there cannot here be pretended, as in moſt other Vices, any *natural Temptation.* Drunkenneſs and Debauchery, Intemperance and Senſuality of all kinds, *have* their proper Allurements; which, though *no juſt Excuſe* indeed, yet afford Sinners a deceitful Plea for themſelves, to alledge that they were over-powered by the Force and Prevalency of Temptation; as St. *Paul* at large argues in the viith chapter to the *Romans.* But to the Sin we are now ſpeaking of, there is *no Temptation* in Nature; unleſs it may be called a Temptation, when a man is *aſhamed* to be thought by abandoned Perſons one that fears God, or is led to think it a part of *Courage* to deſpiſe Religion. Whereas indeed it is not *Courage*, to dare to affront the Almighty; but on the contrary a real inſtance of *Cowardice*, not to dare to perform our Duty towards him. It is as if a Soldier ſhould imagine, that Courage conſiſted; not in oppoſing the *Enemy*, but in daring to diſobey the Orders of his proper *Commander:* The Author of the Book of *Eccleſiaſticus* excellently argues upon This head, ch. iv. 20; *Be not aſhamed when it concerneth thy Soul. There is a Shame that bringeth Sin, and there is a Shame which is Glory and Grace. Accept no perſon againſt thy Soul, and let not the Reverence of any man cauſe thee to fall.*

Neither is *That* any juſt Excuſe, wherewith many deceive themſelves, when they ſwear by any *other* thing, and not by their Maker. For this very Precaution ſhows, that they could as eaſily, if they were careful, avoid the Sin *wholly*, as attend to a *particular* Circumſtance in the *manner* of committing it. Which Circumſtance, nevertheleſs, does not at all hinder it from amounting in reality to the very ſame thing. For as, in common ſpeech, that uſual Prayer, Heaven *bleſs or reward a man*, is evidently of the very ſame import, as if therein had been more expreſsly mentioned, *God who dwelleth in Heaven*; ſo *ſwearing* by any *creature*, does in Truth amount to the ſame thing, as ſwearing by the Name of *God* whoſe Creature it is, and who alone indeed can finally be ſuppoſed to be appealed to, for the *Truth* of the thing affirmed, and for the *Sincerity* of the Intention. *Whoſo*, ſaith our Saviour, *ſhall ſwear by the Altar, ſweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoſo ſhall ſwear by the Temple, ſweareth by it, and by Him that dwelleth therein. And he that ſhall ſwear by Heaven, ſweareth by the Throne of God, and by Him that ſitteth thereon*; Matt. xxiii. 20. The Inference he draws from this Reaſoning, is; Therefore, *Swear not at all; neither by Heaven, for it is God's Throne; nor by the Earth, for it is his Footſtool; neither by Jeruſalem, for it is the City of the great King: Neither by thy Head, becauſe thou canſt not make one Hair white or black. But let your Communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatſoever is more than theſe, cometh of Evil*; Matt. v. 34. And St. *James*, ch. v. 12; *Above all things, my brethren, ſwear not; neither by Heaven, nor by the Earth, nor by any other Oath; but let your yea be Yea, and your nay Nay, leſt ye fall into condemnation.* Simplicity and Plainneſs of Speech, greatly becomes the Sincerity of Chriſtians: Whoſe Profeſſion teaches them to be ſo far removed from all fraud and deceit, in imitation of their Maſter in whoſe mouth was found no Guile; that, did they *in Any Meaſure* live worthy of their holy Profeſſion, there never would be any ground of Suſpicion, never any Occaſion, never any Temptation in matters of common converſation and ordinary concern, to make uſe of any ſuch Aſſeverations, as our Saviour declares to *come from Evil.*

Mat. v. 34.

Some

Some have carried this matter ſo far, (as indeed there are in almoſt all caſes *Extremes* on Both hands,) that they have imagined an Oath to be *Always* and without exception, even upon the moſt ſolemn and moſt important Occaſions, abſolutely unlawful. But that This is evidently a Miſtake, appears from the Example of *God himſelf*, who upon ſolemn occaſions, *becauſe he could ſwear by no greater*, is in Scripture repreſented as *ſwearing by Himſelf*. And our Saviour when the High-prieſt *adjured him by the Living God*, made no Scruple of replying upon that Adjuration. And the Angel in the *Revelation*, when propheſying of the great Changes that ſhould happen in the World; *lifted up his hand to Heaven, and ſware by him that liveth for ever and ever*: (He ſware, *that there ſhould be time no longer*; That is, not, that *time itſelf* ſhould be no more; as ſome have ridiculouſly underſtood it; but that the time of fulfilling the prophecy ſhould no longer be delayed; *Rev.* x. 6.) And St. *Paul*, in aſſuring the Truth of his doctrine, appeals after the following manner, *God is my Witneſs, whom I ſerve in the Goſpel of his Son*, Rom. i. 9; And *Heb.* vi. 16; *An Oath for confirmation, is an End of all Strife*. 'Tis evident therefore, that an Oath upon great and ſolemn occaſions, adminiſtred and taken in the Fear of God, ſeriouſly and with a right Senſe of Religion, is by no means *unlawful*, but on the contrary an Act of real *Honour* to God. *Profanation* of the Name of God, is, when 'tis uſed raſhly and careleſsly, upon light and trivial occaſions, without any juſt Senſe of the Majeſty of God, who is invoked with ſo little Reverence. SERM. XL.

Further; As raſh *Swearing*, ſo all *Curſing* alſo, is a part of that profanation of the Name of God, which is forbidden in the Text. For when men in common Converſation, uſe Curſes and Imprecations againſt their Brethren; as paſſionate and profane men are frequently apt to do; it is either *with* an Intention and Deſire that Miſchief may befal them; which is both malicious towards *Men*, and alſo irreligiouſly thinking light of the Curſe of *God*: Or elſe it is *without* any ſuch Deſire or Intention; and then it is profanely ſuppoſing God to have no regard to their Behaviour; According to the deſcription the Pſalmiſt gives of ſuch perſons, *Pſ.* lxxiii. 11; *Tuſh, ſay they, how ſhould God perceive it? is there knowledge in the moſt High?*

3dly; Another Vice, included in what the Text calls *profaning the Name of God*, is *Scoffing*, *Blaſpheming*, or *ſpeaking reproachfully of Religion*. This is what the Pſalmiſt reckons in the *higheſt* degree of Sins, where he diſtinguiſhes Offenders into *three* ſeveral Ranks; *Pſ.* i. 1, The man that *walketh in the counſel of the ungodly*, the man that *ſtandeth in the way of Sinners*, and the man that *ſitteth in the Seat of the* Scornful: Of the *Scornful*, that is, of thoſe who not only *neglect*, but alſo *ſcoff* at Religion; and make a *mock* at That, which of all things in the World is of the greateſt importance. *Elihu*'s deſcription of ſuch a perſon is very juſt and elegant, though his application of it to *Job* was moſt unrighteous; *Job* xxxiv. 37; *He addeth* Rebellion *unto his Sin, he clappeth his hands amongſt us, and multiplieth his words againſt God*. Were there either None, or but very little and uncertain Evidence for the Truth of Religion; yet, even in *That* caſe, a reaſonable and fair man would be ſo far from making a *mock* at what is ſo uſeful and indeed abſolutely *neceſſary* to the well-being of rational and intelligent Creatures; that on the contrary he could not but wiſh earneſtly, that the Proof of it were much clearer and more convincing than he finds it: This, I ſay, would be the Behaviour of a *reaſonable* perſon, even when he was not *ſatisfied* of the Truth of Religion. But for men who *do* make Profeſſion of Religion, yet at the ſame time wantonly and profanely to ſcoff at the moſt ſerious and important parts of the very Religion they profeſs, the Expectation of a future Judgment, and the Rewards and Puniſhments of another Life; This is of all others the abſurdeſt, and the moſt ſtupid Inſtance of Wickedneſs; Such as no perſons can be guilty of, but thoſe whom St. *Paul* elegantly deſcribes to *have their conſciences ſeared with a hot Iron*, 1 Tim. iv. 1: Of whom, St. *Jude* likewiſe propheſies, ver: 18; that *there ſhould be* mockers *in the laſt time, who ſhould walk after their own*

SERM. XL. *ungodly luſts:* And St. *Peter*, 2 *Pet.* iii. 3; *Scoffers walking after their own Luſts, and ſaying, Where is the Promiſe of his coming?* The Perſons ſpoken of in all theſe places, are not only profeſſed Unbelievers, but alſo vicious and debauched Chriſtians, led, merely by the practice of Vice, into all Profaneneſs and Contempt of Religion. Neither are *Thoſe* men wholly free from the ſame Guilt, who, though *themſelves* not actual Mockers and Scoffers at Religion, yet by their abſurd and unreaſonable Doctrines, Doctrines contrary to the Neceſſary Perfections of God, and to the eternal Reaſons of Things; or by their vicious Lives and debauched Practices, give occaſion to *Others* to *Blaſpheme the Name of God.*

4*thly*; The Name of God is *profaned*, by careleſs and inconſiderate *Vows*: When the *Matter* of them is *unjuſt*; as in the caſe of the *Corban* among the *Jews*, who hypocritically dedicated *That* to the Service of God, and for the Uſe of the Temple, which they *ought* to have employed in relieving the Neceſſities of their deſtitute Parents, *Mar.* vii. 11: Or when the matter of a Vow, is *impoſſible* or *unreaſonable*; or the thing vowed be *unprofitable*, and of no Tendency to promote true Religion; or the *manner* of making the Vow, be *raſh and irreligious.* Many Directions and Cautions of This kind, are to be found in Books of Devotion. But the beſt and only good Rule in This matter is, that among Chriſtians there is no Uſe, no Benefit, no Encouragement given to any ſuch thing, as making any Vows at all. For why ſhould men needleſsly bring ſnares upon their own Souls, or intangle themſelves in Difficulties where there is no Command? The Vows mentioned in the *Old Teſtament*, are All either parts of the *Jewiſh* Ceremonial Law, which is now wholly aboliſhed: Or elſe they ſignify only general *Reſolutions* of ſerving and obeying God, which can never too often nor too ſeriouſly be renewed, as when *Jacob* vowed, that the *Lord ſhould be his God*; that is, that he would always continue ſtedfaſt in the true Religion. In the *New Teſtament*, there is, (I think) no one Inſtance of Any Vow made by a Chriſtian: The Vow of *Aquila*, mentioned *Acts* xviii. 18; and That of the four perſons with whom St. *Paul* purified himſelf, *Acts* xxi, 23; being Both of them Vows, which had been made before the mens converſion to Chriſtianity.

Laſtly: By too frequent familiar and irreverent Mention *of God* in ordinary converſation, without an habitual Senſe and Juſt Awe of him upon our Minds; men are very apt to run into *ſome* degree, of the Fault forbidden in the Text. The *Jews*, were (in the oppoſite Extreme) *Superſtitious* in this Matter. The very *Mahometans*, retain rather too much *Formality* in the ſame kind. But a good Chriſtian, and a ſober and wiſe man, who has a true Senſe of Religion; will eaſily judge, and (without any ſet Rules) naturally practiſe, what is (without affectation) fit and decent, in all caſes of this Nature.

Thus have I briefly deſcribed the ſeveral *Vices*, to which the Prohibition in the Text extends: *Ye ſhall not ſwear by my Name falſely, neither ſhalt thou profane the Name of thy God.* The

III. *Third* and *Laſt* Thing obſervable in the Text, is the *Argument* therein brought to *enforce* the fore-mentioned prohibition: *I am the Lord.* The *Lord*; that is, He whoſe *Sovereignty* and Supreme *Dominion* or *Authority* over us, gives him a Right to *demand*; and whoſe continual *Mercy* and *Goodneſs* towards us, gives him reaſon to *expect*, that we ſhould, in an equal Senſe both of *Duty* and *Gratitude*, pay all poſſible Obedience to him. The *Lord*; who made and governs all things; whoſe Power is irreſiſtible, and his Kingdom infinite and eternal; who *will not be mocked*, nor *hold them guiltleſs that take his Name in vain.* Will *not* hold them *guiltleſs*; that is, will *certainly* and *ſeverely* puniſh them. For ſo the Scripture often very elegantly uſes a *diminutive* manner of ſpeaking, in the deſcription of Puniſhment. He that does and teaches ſuch things, ſaith our Saviour, *ſhall be* leaſt *in the Kingdom of God*; that is, he ſhall leaſt of all men ever enter therein at all. And they that do ſuch things, ſaith St. *Paul*, ſhall *not inherit the Kingdom of God*; that is, ſhall be moſt ſeverely puniſhed in the place of Torment. So likewiſe, the Lord will *not* hold the falſe Swearer

Swearer *guiltleſs*; that is, his Anger ſhall burn moſt *exemplarily* againſt ſuch Perſons. This therefore is the plain meaning of the Phraſe, *I am the Lord*: It is an *Argument* or *Motive* of Obedience, drawn from the conſideration of the *Perſon* to whom it is due. It is the *Lord*; whoſe *Goodneſs* and *Mercy* towards us, obliges in point of *Gratitude*; and whoſe *Power* and *Juſtice* will exact of us in point of *Duty*, Obedience to his Commands. The Characters are, *both* of them, lively and emphatically expreſſed, in the Name by which the Lord was proclaimed before *Moſes*, Exod. xxxiv. 6; *The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering and abundant in Goodneſs and Truth; keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin, and that will by no means cleaſ the guilty.*

SERMON

SERMON XLI.

How Wicked Men are deceived to their Destruction.

2 THESS. ii. 11, 12.

And for this cause God shall send them strong Delusion, that they should believe a Lie: That they all might be damned, who believed not the Truth, but had pleasure in Unrighteousness.

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THESE words contain a strong and lively Description, of the *Nature* and *Grounds* of *Wickedness*; of the *Destruction* in which it will at last, necessarily terminate; of the *Delusions*, by which men are drawn into that Wickedness which must terminate in their Destruction; and of the *Justice* of the Divine Providence, in permitting them to be so deluded. In discoursing therefore upon This Subject, I shall consider, 1*st*, The *Character* by which *Wicked men* are here described: They *believe not the Truth*, and they *have Pleasure in Unrighteousness*. 2*dly*, The *Destruction*, into which the Wickedness thus described, must in the End necessarily lead men: Expressed in these severe words, *That they all might be damned*. 3*dly*, The *Means*, by which men are enticed and deceived into this final Destruction: It is by *believing a Lie*. 4*thly*, The *Strength* of the *Delusion*, by which men are thus

thus cauſed to believe a Lie: *God ſhall ſend them* ſtrong *Deluſion.* 5*thly* and *laſtly*; The *Juſtice* of Providence, in permitting them to be thus deluded: Expreſſed in the words, *For This Cauſe*: Not arbitrarily, not without juſt and good reaſon; but *for This Cauſe*, for the *Cauſe* mentioned in the words immediately foregoing, ver. 10; *becauſe they received not the Love of the Truth, that they might be ſaved.* SERM. XLI.

I. *Firſt*; Here is the proper and eſſential *Character*, by which *Wicked men* are diſtinguiſhed and deſcribed; They *believe not the Truth*, and they have *Pleaſure in Unrighteouſneſs*. *Truth*, is the Foundation of *Right*; and the *Knowledge* of Truth and Right, is the Foundation of *Virtuous Practice*. The *Firſt Principle* therefore and *Ground-work* of all Religion, is the *Love of Truth*; the Deſire of knowing what is in itſelf *Fit* and *Right* to be done; the Deſire of knowing the *Will* of the Supreme Author and Preſerver of our Being; the Deſire of knowing what the true *Reaſon and Equity* of every Caſe, wherein we are to act, requires. This Temper, cannot but be acceptable to *God*; and it is the Great Spring and Principle of every good Action among *Men*. Without *This*, there cannot be any ſuch thing as *Religion*, or any real *Goodneſs*; there cannot (as St. *Paul* expreſſes himſelf) be *any Virtue*, or *any Praiſe*; Phil. iv. 8. A man may *accidentally* do Good Actions, Actions materially Good and Uſeful; he may do them when it will ſerve his preſent Intereſt, or happen to fall in with any Temporal Views. But ſuch a one has not any real Virtue or Religion, nor can be depended upon with any certainty; becauſe his Goodneſs ſtands upon no ſteddy Principles, and is built upon no Foundation. Every the leaſt *Obſtacle* or *Worldly Diſcouragement*, will put an entire *Stop* in him to any Good Intention: Every the leaſt *Blaſt* of *Paſſion*, will *divert* and *drive* him from That Courſe, which Reaſon was ſteering: Every the leaſt *Allurement* of *Pleaſure* or *Profit*, will *draw* him aſide from the paths of Virtue and Integrity. And *This* is what *ought* to have been meant by That Diſtinction, which has ſometimes been made, (if there be any room for making ſuch Diſtinction at all,) between *Religious Actions* and *Actions merely Moral*. When any thing is done out of regard to *Truth* and *Right*, to the *Reaſon* and *Equity* of the Caſe; the Action, is really a *Religious* Action; becauſe *Truth*, and *Reaſon*, and *Right*, are eſſentially agreeable to the *Nature* of *GOD*, and by neceſſary conſequence conformable to his *Will*. But whatever is at any time done *without regard* to theſe; however the Action may in its own nature poſſibly and accidentally be *Moral and Good*, Moral and Good *merely* with regard to the *Action itſelf*; yet in the *Perſon* doing it, there is in truth nothing of *Morality* or *Goodneſs*; becauſe *His* Views are nothing but the gratifying his own preſent Humour, or ſecuring to himſelf ſome Temporal Pleaſure or Profit. Now This *Diſregard* to *Truth and Right*; This *Unconcernedneſs* in men, to know the *Reaſon of Things* and the *Will of God*; This giving up of themſelves conſequently to the Conduct of mere *Will* and *Pleaſure*, *Paſſion* and *Appetite*; is what the Text calls *not Believing the Truth*. By which is meant, not that every *good man is infallible*, ſo as always to embrace every Truth; or that every *Miſtake* in not embracing the Truth, will juſtly denominate any one a *Bad man*. For as the *doing* an Action *good* in its own nature, may yet poſſibly not be a *religious* nor *moral* Act in him that does it, if it be done not out of a *Principle* of Virtue: So, on the other ſide, the *receiving an Errour*, or the *not receiving the Truth*, if it proceeds not from a *Principle* oppoſite to Truth, from *Unreaſonableneſs*, from *Viciouſneſs*, and from *hating to attend*; but merely from accidental Want of proper information; is not what the Scripture calls, *disbelieving the Truth*. But the Meaning of *not believing the Truth*, in the Scripture-ſenſe of the phraſe, is, *rejecting it contemptuouſly*, without having any ſollicitude to *inquire after* it. For, the ſame perſons who in the *Text* are threatned that they ſhall be *condemned* for *not* Believing *the Truth*; are, in the words immediately fore-going, declared to *periſh, becauſe they received not the* Love of *the Truth, that they might be ſaved*. And *Unbelief*, In *This* ſenſe, as oppoſed to the *Love* of Truth, very naturally leads men to take *pleaſure in Unrighteouſneſs*. For he that is *little ſollicitous* to

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ſtudy the Truth, and Reaſon, and Equity of Things, or to inquire after and underſtand the Will of God; will conſequently of courſe, according as the particular Bent of his Paſſions lead him, either give himſelf up to *Voluptuouſneſs* and *diſſolute* Practices, or ſet himſelf to acquire *Riches* by *unjuſt* and *corrupt* Methods, or make *Power and Dominion* his principle Aim, for the Purpoſe of *Vain-glory, Tyranny, and Oppreſſion.* Which are the Great Inſtances wherein men who *believe not the Truth*, are apt to have *Pleaſure in Unrighteouſneſs.*

II. *Secondly*; Here is the *Deſtruction*, into which the Wickedneſs thus deſcribed, muſt in the End neceſſarily lead men; expreſſed in theſe Severe words; *That they all might be damned.* The Meaning of which, is not, *To the End that* they *may* be condemned; but, *So that* they *will* be condemned. The words are not intended to expreſs what God has ultimately in *View* or *Deſign*, but what *in Event* muſt neceſſarily come to paſs. The *Deſign* and *End* of All the Divine Threatnings, is not that men ſhould finally periſh; but that, by bringing them to the Obedience of God's Commands, their Deſtruction might be *prevented.* God has ſworn by himſelf; *As I live, ſaith the Lord, I have no pleaſure in the Death of Him that dieth, but rather that he ſhould turn from his ways and live.* God *wills not that Any ſhould periſh, but that All ſhould come to Repentance.* He would *have all men to be ſaved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth.* But becauſe, under a *righteous* and *holy* Governour, who can never poſſibly be reconciled to Wickedneſs, 'tis neither reaſonable nor poſſible that men ſhould be *ſaved*, who have never had any Regard to *Truth* and *Right*, nor habituated themſelves to the Practice of Any *Virtue*; or that Sinners ſhould eſcape the juſt *Puniſhment* of Sin, without forſaking the *Sins* to which the Puniſhment is annexed; therefore God has been pleaſed to *prove* men with proper *Tryals*, and ſuffer various *Temptations* to ſurround them; to the end that the *Righteous* might *diſtinguiſh* themſelves from the *Wicked*, the *Corrigible* from the *Incorrigible*; and ſo the *Sentence of Condemnation* might finally come upon *Thoſe*, and upon *Thoſe only*, who *love not the Truth*, and who *have Pleaſure in Unrighteouſneſs.* The like manner of ſpeaking, is frequently uſed in Scripture upon Other occaſions. Thus *Matt.* xxiii. 34; *Behold I ſend unto you Prophets, and Wiſe men, and Scribes*; *And ſome of them ye ſhall kill and crucify, and ſome of them ſhall ye ſcourge in your Synagogues, and perſecute them from City to City: THAT upon you may come all the righteous Blood ſhed upon the Earth*; *from the Blood of righteous* Abel, *unto the Blood of* Zacharias. The meaning is: Not that the *End* and *Intention* of God's ſending forth Preachers of Righteouſneſs into the World, was that *They* might be perſecuted, and Then *Wicked Men* puniſhed for perſecuting and ſlaying them: But that All, who were capable of Correction and Amendment, being converted by the Preaching of theſe righteous perſons; the Wrath of God might finally fall upon *Thoſe only*, who by rejecting ſo many repeated Admonitions to Repentance, had ſhown themſelves to be abſolutely and altogether incorrigible. Again, *Mar.* iv. 12; *All theſe things*, ſays our Lord, *are done in Parables*; *THAT ſeeing, they may ſee, and not perceive*; *and hearing, they may hear, and not underſtand*; *leaſt at any time they ſhould be converted, and their Sins ſhould be forgiven them.* The Senſe is; Not that the *Deſign* of Chriſt, was to hinder men from underſtanding, and being converted, and ſaved; but that he choſe to deliver his Doctrine in ſuch a manner, as that it might be received by *Thoſe only*, who were ſincerely deſirous to know and to obey the Will of God, whilſt the wilful and incorrigible remained *Blind* and *Deaf* to all his Exhortations. And thus therefore likewiſe in the words of the Text; This phraſe *THAT they all might be damned, who believed not the Truth, but had pleaſure in Unrighteouſneſs*; does not mean, that the ultimate *Deſign* and *View* of Providence in trying men with various Temptations, is that the *Wicked* may *be Damned*; but that, thoſe who ſeek after *Truth* and *love Righteouſneſs*, being diſtinguiſhed and proved by Theſe Temptations, the ſentence of Condemnation may fall *only* upon the Lovers of *Falſehood* and *Iniquity.*

III. *Thirdly*;

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III. *Thirdly*; The Text repreſents to us the *Means* in particular, by which wicked men are inticed and deceived to their Deſtruction: 'Tis by *believing a Lie*. To chooſe *Miſery* for its *own* ſake, without any Cover or Deceit; is beyond the utmoſt Poſſibilities of Human Folly. To chooſe *Wickedneſs*, directly for *Wickedneſs* ſake; without the Deluſion either of ſome preſent Gratification, or of ſome future fooliſh Hope; is beyond the malice of the very worſt of Men, perhaps even of Devils alſo. When *Angels* were tempted to *leave their firſt Habitation*, and *abode not in the Truth*; it could not be, but by firſt *believing* ſome *Lie*. And whenever any *Man*, gives himſelf up to any vicious or unrighteous Practice; if he could be perſwaded ſeriouſly to conſider with himſelf, he would find that it is by chooſing with his Will and Appetite to entertain certain Notions, which his Underſtanding and Conſcience does at the ſame time admoniſh him are not agreeable to Reaſon. This is what the Text calls, *believing a Lie*. Thus, though the Works of Nature do every moment prove the Being of God, yet *This* (as St. *Peter* expreſſes it) very many *are willingly ignorant of*, 2 Pet. iii. 5; contenting themſelves with the empty inſignificant Names, of *Nature*, *Chance*, or *Fate*. Others, believing the *Being* of God, as the Great Author of *Nature*; yet are willing to think Him *regardleſs* of That Difference of *Moral Good and Evil*, which among Mortal Men 'tis hardly poſſible even for the moſt *Careleſs Governours* not to have Some Regard to. Others, convinced of God's *real* concern for Virtue, and Hatred of Vice; and that there *will be* a final day of Accounts; and being moreover admoniſhed by the continual Voice of Reaſon and Conſcience, and by repeated Declarations in Scripture, that God will certainly judge men *according to their Works*; that *whatſoever a Man ſoweth, That ſhall he alſo reap*; that the Goſpel ſtands firm upon *This* Foundation, *Let every one that nameth the Name of Chriſt, depart from iniquity*; and that *Any other* Foundation a man can poſſibly build upon, will fail him as the looſe *Sand*: Yet nevertheleſs ſuffer themſelves to be impoſed upon with ſo ſtrange a Deluſion, as to reconcile the continuance of ſome ſinful Practice or other, with the Hope of Salvation; in reliance, either upon the *Goodneſs of God*, or upon the *Merits of Chriſt*, or upon the *Interceſſion of Saints*, or upon the *Abſolutions of the Prieſt*, or upon the *Sacraments of the Church*, or upon Notions of unconditionate *Predeſtination*, or upon a *Death-bed Repentance*, or upon the *Strength* or *Rightneſs of their Faith*, in believing things they underſtand nothing of, and in *adhering zealouſly* to certain *Parties* of men. Which laſt, is perhaps of all Others the *greateſt* and moſt *extenſive* Deluſion. Numbers of men ſatisfy themſelves, with giving themſelves up to the Guidance of an *Infallible Church*. An *infallible Church*, they are told, there muſt needs be; becauſe the *True Church* cannot poſſibly *err*; That is, They that are in the *Right*, cannot, while they *are ſo*, be in the *Wrong*. Which is exactly the ſame Argument, by which the Maintainers of *Fate* do, from the very *Suppoſition* of *Liberty itſelf*, endeavour to prove that there cannot poſſibly be any ſuch thing as *Liberty* at all. A man having at any time *Liberty* to chooſe whether he will *act* or *not act*, muſt of neceſſity either chooſe to *act*, or chooſe *not to act*; becauſe two Contradictories, cannot poſſibly exiſt together. And which ſoever part he freely chooſes, yet, as ſoon as it is choſen, he cannot poſſibly but have choſen it becauſe 'tis impoſſible that any thing ſhould *be* and *not be* at the ſame time. By the very ſame ridiculous Argument, the *True Church* muſt indeed of neceſſity be *infallible*, becauſe *the Truth* cannot poſſibly be *Falſe* or *erroneous*. But *who* are *poſſeſſed* of this *Truth*, All men that are deſirous not to *believe a Lie*, muſt *conſider* with *Probity* and *Care*. That God has appointed for all men an *Infallible Judge* of *Religious* Controverſies, is believed by *Many*; for no other reaſon, but becauſe they fanſy it would be better he *ſhould have* done it, though it is notorious he has *not done* it; and they who have pretended to it with the higheſt Preſumption, have of All mortal men fallen into the moſt abſurd Errours. For the determining of *Civil* Controverſies among the nations of the Earth, there is (if poſſible;) ſtill *greater Need* of an *Infallible Judge*: And yet, in This caſe, no man was ever ſo void of Senſe, as to contend that there

SERM. XLI. *Therefore* certainly *is* such a Judge, because he could wish there *were* such a one, though he plainly sees that there is *none*. The Truth is: God, in *Both* cases, has thought fit to leave *rational Creatures* to the Use of their *Reason*; that such as love and seek after *Truth* and *Right*, might distinguish themselves from Those who, for the gratification of *present Passions and Interests*, are always ready to *believe a Lie*.

IV. *Fourthly*; The Text affectionately represents to us how very *strong* the *Delusion* often is, by which wicked men are led to believe a Lie. *God shall send them* Strong *Delusion*. The Meaning is; not that God, by his Superiour Power and Knowledge, *imposes upon* and *deceives* his Creatures. For *who* could possibly withstand *that Deceit?* or *who* could justly be blamed for being *so deceived?* or why could not *Good men* be as possibly and as easily imposed upon by *such a Deception*, as the most abandoned *Sinners?* But the Meaning is; that the Deceit is of such a nature, as the Divine Providence *thinks fit* to *permit* to come *very strongly*, upon those who attend not to That Light of Reason and Religion, by which God directs and calls men into the Paths of Truth and Virtue. According to the nature of the *Jewish* language, whatever is remarkable and extraordinary in its kind, they express by the addition of the *name of God* to it. Thus Mountains exceeding *large and high*, are Mountains *of God*. And, by a like Analogy; whatever Event, in the course of Providence, comes to pass *remarkably* either in *Manner* or *Degree*, is in the *Hebrew* language peculiarly expressed as being done *of God*. *God* sends men *strong Delusion*, when by their own Folly or Wickedness they are *greatly deluded*. *God tempted David*, that is, *David was strongly tempted*, to number the people. *God hardned Pharoah's Heart*; that is, the *Heart of Pharaoh* was *extremely obstinate* and *wilful*. To the *Jews* in the Wilderness, (according to the Complaint of *Moses*, Deut. xxix. 4;) *the Lord did not give an Heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and Ears to Hear*; that is, they were *mavellously stupid and perverse*, not to be convinced and led to Obedience by all the mighty Works that God had done for them; As 'tis expressly explained, ver. 3. And the like Complaint in After-Ages concerning the same people upon the like occasion, is made frequently by the Prophets, and by our Lord himself, and by his Apostles; that *God gave them the Spirit of Slumber*, Rom. xi. 8; *Is.* xxix. 10; and that *God blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see nor understand*, Joh. xii. 40; That is, the *Strength* and *Obstinacy* of their *Prejudices* was extremely *Great* and surprizing. And, in These and all other the like Instances; the Delusion, the Temptation, or Ground of the Prejudice, is what the Wisdom of Providence knows to be a proper and fitting Tryal or Probation, of those who *are* or *are not* sincerely desirous to obey him. Our Lord, in his Prophetick description of the most *corrupt* Ages of *his Church*, expresses this matter in *very strong* Words, *Matt.* xxiv. 24; They, (that is, the *Church of Christ* falsely so calling themselves,) *shall show great Signs and Wonders, insomuch that (if it were possible) they shall deceive the very Elect*. Concerning which words it is particularly to be observed, that as they very emphatically set forth the *Strength* of the *Delusion*, by which wicked men are seduced; so they no less clearly express at the same time, (which was the

V. *Fifth* and *Last* thing I proposed to show,) the *Justice* of Providence, in permitting them to be thus deluded. The *Signs* and *Wonders*, the *Delusions* and *Temptations* spoken of by our Lord, are indeed *very Great*; but they are so only to *vicious and corrupt* minds; to men who have *no real Sense of True Virtue*, but judge of religion merely by Worldly Shows and Parties. On virtuous and good Minds, on sincere Lovers of Truth and Right, these Delusions have *No Power*. *If any man will do the Will of God, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God*. The *Elect*, (that is, as our Lord elsewhere describes them, they who receive the word of God *in an honest and good Heart*,) cannot *possibly* be *deceived* in this matter. They who place their Religion where our Saviour has founded it, in the *Love of God* and of *All Mankind*; on These, wicked and pernicious Errours can have *No Hold*. The *Power and Signs and*

Lying

Lying Wonders referred to in *my Text*, are, the *Deceivableneſs*, only of *Unrighteouſneſs*: And the *Deluſion ſent* upon men, *that they ſhould believe a Lie*, is declared to be *Strong*, and to be judicially permitted as ſuch, expreſsly *for this Cauſe* only; "becauſe they received not the love of the Truth, but had Pleaſure in Unrighteouſneſs: Giving heed to ſeducing Spirits, *becauſe they* had "their Conſciences ſeared *as it were* with a hot Iron: 1 *Tim.* iv. 1." Thus *Balaam* was deceived; becauſe he *deſired* to go *againſt* the Will of God, as far as he durſt; and hoped to prevail upon God by ſacrificing *from one Hill to another*; and at laſt, *for the Wages of Unrighteouſneſs*, adviſed the *Moabites* to tempt the *Iſraelites* to *fornication*, that God might be as it were obliged to give them up. *Ahab* was *deceived*, and with a very ſtrong deluſion too, even by a *lying Spirit put into the Mouth of his Prophets*; becauſe he did not enquire, with a *Deſire* of knowing the Truth; but enquired of Thoſe only who had been accuſtomed to flatter him, and hated thoſe who had told him the Truth. *Saul* was deceived; becauſe he would not be perſwaded to underſtand, that to *Obey* the Will of God, *is better than Sacrifice, and to hearken than the Fat of Rams*. The *Prophets* of *Iſrael* were *deceived*; and *I*, ſaith the Lord, *have deceived* thoſe Prophets, *Ezek.* xiv. 9; becauſe they had *ſet up Idols in their Hearts*, ver. 7. The Words are plainly, not a declaration of God's *Power* in impoſing upon weak men, but the Threatning of a *juſt Puniſhment* in ſuffering them to impoſe upon themſelves. The Caſe is the very ſame, in all *Other Inſtances*; And the plain Application of the whole, is; that there is no other Security againſt Fatal Errours, but the ſincere Love of Truth and Virtue.

SERM. XLI.

ver. 9. 10. 11. 12.

SERMON XLII.

The Design of the Gospel is to separate the Good from the Bad.

MATT. iii. 12.

Whose Fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his Floor, and gather his Wheat into the Garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable Fire.

SERM. LXII.

Heb. xi. 8, 9.

THE great Design of God in *all* Institutions of Religion from the Beginning of the World, has been to *separate* to himself, out of the corrupt and degenerate Bulk of Mankind, *a peculiar people, zealous of good Works.* This was his Purpose in *calling* the *Patriarchs* to *go out* from their native Place, "not knowing whither they "went; *and to* sojourn in the land of Promise, as in a strange country," separate from the idolatrous Cities and Nations of the World. This was his Design in giving the *Jews* a Law, by which they were distinguished from all People upon Earth, and set up as *a Standard to the Nations*, and for a *Testimony* and

and *Example* of the Worſhip of the *One True God* of the Univerſe. This was the End and Intent of his ſending his *Son* into the World, with fuller and clearer Declarations of the Divine Will, and with ſtronger Arguments and Motives of Religion, drawn from the conſiderations of a *Future* and *Eternal* State. SERM. XLII.

Under *Each* of theſe Diſpenſations: the *profeſſed* Worſhippers of the True God, his *viſible* Church or People, has always too plainly conſiſted of a *mixt* number of Hypocrites and ſincere perſons. So that it is very evident, that in every Age, and in every Place, the *children of the Promiſe* in the *literal Senſe* according to *the Fleſh*, the *Viſible Church* or *Profeſſed Worſhippers of the True God*, are but the *Type* or *Repreſentative* of the *Real inviſible Church* of God. And all the great Promiſes, which God has ever made to his *Church*, to his *People*, to the *Families* or *Nations*, of his *True Worſhippers*, muſt of neceſſity be all along ſo underſtood, as that *Wicked* and *Unworthy* perſons, of whatever *Family* or *Nation* or *profeſſion of Religion* they be, ſhall be excluded from the Benefit of thoſe Promiſes, ſhall be *cut off from* God's *People*; And *Virtuous men* of All Nations, "from the Eaſt and from the Weſt and from the North, and "from the South," ſhall be accepted in their Stead. That is to ſay: In like manner as the Promiſe was made *originally*, not to *All* the children of *Abraham*, but to *Iſaac* only; and not to *Both* the Sons of *Iſaac*, but to *Jacob* only: And among the Poſterity of *Jacob*, *All were not Iſrael, which were of Iſrael*; but in *Elijah*'s days, *ſeven thouſand* only were the True *Iſrael*; "*and in the time of* "Iſaiah, though the number of the children of Iſrael *was* as the Sand of the "Sea, *yet* a remnant *only was to be* ſaved; *And in* Hoſea *God ſays*, I will call "Them my People, which were not my people; and Her beloved, which "was not beloved: *So, under the* Goſpel *likewiſe*, not All *that are* Called, "*are* Choſen; *And* not every one that ſaith unto *Chriſt*, Lord, Lord, *is* "*a real Diſciple of Chriſt*; but he that doth the Will of *his* Father which is "in Heaven.

Towards *ſeparating* the true *Servants of God* from a vicious and corrupt World, "*by* turning men from Darkneſs to Light, and from the Power of Sa"tan unto God: *Towards* gathering together in one, the children of God "that were ſcattered abroad, *Joh.* xi. 52: *Towards* purifying unto *God* a pe"culiar people, a choſen generation, a royal Prieſthood, a Holy Nation, a "glorious Church, not having Spot or Wrinkle or any ſuch thing," as the Scripture emphatically ſpeaks: Towards This, I ſay, the *Goſpel* of Chriſt has even in the *preſent* life, by the Excellency of its Doctrine, by the Purity of its Precepts, and by the Promiſe of an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, availed *much more* than any Former Inſtitution of Religion. But the *complete* Eſtabliſhment of the Kingdom and City of God, will be in the *Future* State; when the *Wicked* ſhall be *ſeparated* from among the *Juſt*, totally and for ever. The *Power* of accompliſhing which great Event, being committed to *Chriſt*; it is by *This* peculiar character, this *Power* of *Judgment* committed unto him, that he is diſtinguiſhed infinitely from all *Other* Preachers of Righteouſneſs, *I indeed*, ſays *John the Baptiſt* in the words preceding my Text; "I in"deed baptize you with Water, unto Repentance: But He that cometh af"ter me, is mightier than I; whoſe Shoes I am not worthy to bear: He ſhall "baptize you with the Holy Ghoſt, and with Fire. Whoſe Fan is in his hand, "and he will throughly purge his Floor, and gather his Wheat into the Gar"ner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable Fire.

Other Preachers of Righteouſneſs, under different Diſpenſations in All Ages did indeed *inſtruct* men in their Duty, *invited* and *exhorted* them to Repentance, ſhowed them the *neceſſity* of Amendment and Reformation of Manners, laid before them *in general* the Promiſes and Threatnings of God: Which is what *John* here expreſſes under this character of his *Own* Preaching, *I indeed baptize you with Water unto Repentance*. But *Chriſt* taught with an *Authority* ſingular and peculiar to himſelf, as one who had Power to *aſſiſt* his Followers with what Gifts and Graces he pleaſed, as one who was to be *himſelf* the *Judge* of their Uſe

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or Abuse of his Assistances. *He* came to *baptize* men *with the Holy Ghost, and with Fire.* *He* declared to men, in the Last and most Complete manner, the Whole Will of God. *He* had Power to endue his Apostles with *miraculous Gifts*, and to send down upon them the *Holy Ghost* under the similitude of *Fire*; representing its Influence over the Minds of Men to be as much more *efficacious* than *John's* Baptism, as *Fire* is in its nature more powerful and penetrating than *Water.* *He* was able to *search the Heart and Reins*; being *himself* The *Word of God quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and discerning the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart.* And This, not only with Regard to the Persons he preached to, and with whom he was actually *present*; But through *All Ages* and in *All Places*, This his Power continues over his *Whole* Church, even 'till his final Coming to Judgment. At which time, and by which Last Act of his Power, it will fully appear, that *his Fan is in his Hand, and he will throughly purge his Floor, and gather his Wheat into the Garner*; *but he will burn up the Chaff with unquenchable Fire.*

In the Words, there are *Two* Particulars, very remarkable. 1*st*, A *Supposition*, that *Good* and *Evil* are really *different in Kind*, absolutely and intrinsecally, essentially and in the Nature of Things: For *Wheat* and *Chaff* are not mere external arbitrary Denominations, but Things in their whole Nature and Kind really and essentially different. 2*dly*, A *Declaration*, that the Great Design of God, as in *every* Dispensation of Religion in general, so in the *Gospel* more particularly, is to *separate* the *Evil* from the *Good* by proper Trials; And that This Design will be *effectually* accomplished by *Christ*; in the *present* life *partly*, and to *certain degrees*; in the *future* life *perfectly*, *totally*, and *finally.* *His Fan is in his Hand, and he will throughly purge his Floor, and gather his Wheat into the Garner*; *but he will burn up the Chaff with unquenchable Fire.*

I. *First*; It is *Supposed* in the Text, that *Good* and *Evil* are really *different in Kind*, absolutely and intrinsecally, essentially and in the Nature of Things. This appears in the Similitude under which *Good and Bad Men* are here represented, of *Wheat* and *Chaff*; which are not mere external arbitrary Denominations, but Things in their whole Nature and Kind really and essentially different. The *Whole Foundation* of Religion, and of God's governing the World at all, as a Moral Governour; relies entirely upon This Principle, that Moral Good and Evil, Virtue and Vice, are, in the nature of Things, essential and immutable; and not arbitrary, or changeable Characters. That by the Free Choice of the *Will* only, and by Practice consequent upon such Choice, and not by any mere external *Operation upon* Men, or arbitrary *Denomination of* them, can real Virtue or Viciousness be acquired. That every Man *is*, as to his *Moral* character, what his own Behaviour and Practice makes him, really and intrinsecally, and by as certain and determinate a distinction; as *Wheat* and *Chaff* are, by their real and proper natures, different from each other. That *God* in all his Commandments, made known either by the Light of Reason or by revealed declarations of his Will, really and sincerely *intends* and *desires*, as a Beneficent and Good Governour, to bring Men by the habitual Practice of Virtue to such a Temper and Constitution of Mind, as is the only possible Qualification by which they can become capable of eternal Happiness in the enjoyment of his unchangeable Favour. For *God cannot deny Himself*; 2 Tim. ii. 13. He cannot alter his own Nature; or any more possibly approve *unrighteous* Practices or Persons, than a man can knowingly choose to preserve the *Chaff* and throw away his *Wheat.* This then being *Supposed* as a First Principle; the Text contains.

II. *Secondly*; A distinct *Declaration*, that the Great Design of God, as in *every* Dispensation of Religion *in general*, so in the *Gospel* more particularly, is to *separate* the *Evil* from the *Good* by proper Trials; And that This Design will be *effectually* accomplished by *Christ*; in the *present* life *partly*, and to *certain degrees*; in the *future* life *perfectly*, *totally*, and *finally.* His *Fan is in his Hand,*

Hand, and he will thoroughly purge his Floor, and gather his Wheat into the Garner; but he will burn up the Chaff with unquenchable Fire.

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The *Jews* of old, having received repeated Promiſes of a *Saviour* to appear in the latter days; and having their Hearts more ſet upon Proſperity and Power, than upon the promoting of Virtue and True Religion; were extremely apt to flatter themſelves with expectations of wonderfully *Happy Times*, when their promiſed Meſſiah ſhould appear. But God by his latter *Prophets*, even *before* the Coming of Chriſt, gave them very plain intimations, that the Salvation *He* promiſed them, was of a very different kind from what vain men were apt to imagine: It was to be a *Salvation* of *ſuch* a kind, as would be of no pleaſure or advantage at all to Any wicked and corrupt Mind. "Mal. iii. 1; "Behold, *ſays he*, the Lord whom ye ſeek, ſhall ſuddenly come to his Temple, "even the Meſſenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, he ſhall "come, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts. But who may abide the day of his Coming? "and who ſhall ſtand when He appeareth? for he is like a Refiner's Fire, and "like Fuller's Sope. And he ſhall ſit as a Refiner and Purifier of Silver; and "he ſhall purify the Sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and ſilver, that they "may offer unto the Lord an Offering in Righteouſneſs——And I will come "near to you to Judgment; and I will be a ſwift Witneſs againſt the Sorcerers, (*that is, againſt all Teachers of artificial Methods to make men Religious "without True Virtue,*) and againſt the Adulterers, and againſt falſe Swearers, "and againſt thoſe that oppreſs the Hireling in his Wages, the Widow and "the Fatherleſs, and that turn aſide the Stranger from his Right, and fear not "Me, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts." Theſe words are a very ſignificant *Prediction* of that which in the *New Teſtament* was afterwards more fully and diſtinctly ſet forth; that the Salvation by Chriſt, was not to be a Salvation of *Any ſinful Nation*, or *ſinful Perſons*; but of Thoſe only, who, by the Influences of the Goſpel, ſhould be prevailed upon to ſeparate themſelves from a vicious and corrupt World, by an effectual and exemplary Reformation of Manners. Chriſt came into the World, not to anſwer Expectations of *Ambition* and *Covetouſneſs* not to advance his Diſciples to Temporal *Power* and *Grandeur*; but *to finiſh tranſgreſſion, and to make an end of Sins, and to bring in everlaſting Righteouſneſs*: Dan. ix. 24. And whatever tends not to promote *Theſe* Ends, is of *no* account in *His* Religion. The Deſign of *His* Coming, was, that he might "gather together in one, the children of God that were ſcattered abroad; *Joh.* xi. 52. *That* "he might redeem us "from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good "Works; *Tit.* ii. 14. *That he might* ſanctify and cleanſe—*and* preſent to himſelf a "glorious Church, not having Spot or Wrinkle, or any ſuch thing, but that it "ſhould be Holy and without Blemiſh;" Eph. v. 27. This was the Deſign of Chriſt's coming into the World: And the Method in which he accompliſhes this Great End, (far different from the Expectations of thoſe who looked for a *Temporal* Kingdom of *Eaſe* and *Power*,) is This. In the *firſt* place, he has *by himſelf purged our Sins*, Heb. i. 3; has *put away Sin by the Sacrifice of himſelf*; ch. ix. 26. That is: He has made an acceptable Atonement, and obtained Forgiveneſs for all ſuch as ſhall ſincerely repent, and ſhall for the future *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*. Which that they may effectually be enabled to do, he has in the *next* place made a moſt clear and full diſcovery of the Will of God; *Teaching us*, in a more exact and perfect manner than ever, "that "denying Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly "and godly, in this preſent World:" Giving us moreover *Aſſurance* of the *Aſſiſtance* of his Holy Spirit: Laying before us in the cleareſt *Light*, the glorious Hopes of *Life and Immortality*; and *revealing from Heaven*, in the moſt expreſs and affectionate manner, *the Wrath of God againſt all Ungodlineſs and Unrighteouſneſs of men*. The ſtrongeſt and moſt pathetick Admonitions are now given to Sinners, that This is the *Laſt* Diſpenſation of Mercy God will afford to Mankind; and that whoſoever rejects the gracious Terms of This Goſpel, there will *remain* to him *no more Sacrifice for Sin*. "*That* into the City *of* "*God* there ſhall in no caſe enter any thing that defileth, neither whatſoever "worketh

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" worketh abomination, or maketh a Lie; *Rev.* xxi. 27. *That, if* he that de-
" ſpiſed Moſes's Law, died without Mercy, of how much ſorer Puniſhment
" ſhall He be thought worthy, who *ſhall* tread under foot the Son of God, and
" do deſpite unto the Spirit of Grace? *Heb.* x. 29. *That* the Ax is now laid
" to the root of the Trees; and every Tree, that bringeth not forth good
" Fruit, is *decreed to be* hewn down and caſt into the Fire; *Matt.* iii. 10.
" *Which expreſſion is of the ſame import with that in the Text:* His Fan is in his
" hand, and he will thoroughly purge his Floor, and gather his Wheat into
" the Garner; but he will burn up the Chaff with unquenchable Fire. *For* the
" time is come, that Judgment muſt begin at the Houſe of God, 1 *Pet.* iv. 17;
" and if it firſt begin at Us, what ſhall the end be of Them that obey not the
" Goſpel of God? And if the Righteous ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the
" ungodly and Sinner appear?" Theſe words are ſpoken by St. *Peter*, upon occaſion of the Many *Afflictions and Perſecutions*, wherewith God ſometimes thinks fit to *try* the fidelity of his Servants; leſt any one ſhould *think it ſtrange concerning the fiery Tryal, which is to try* them; ver. 12. For *Temptations* of All kinds, and *Perſecutions* in particular, that is, all Temporal Inconveniencies annexed at any time to the purſuit of Truth and Virtue; are, in the language of my Text, *the Fan* wherewith in the *preſent life* God *purges his Floor*; ſeparating the Hypocrites from the righteous, as *Gold* is ſeparated from the Droſs by *Fire*, or as
Iſ. xxx. 24. *Wheat* from the *Chaff* which *hath been winnowed with the Fan.* This is the Foundation of thoſe expreſſions in the *Old Teſtament:* " Many ſhall be purified, and made white, " and tried; And ſome of them of Underſtanding ſhall fall, to try " them, and to purge, and to make them white; *Dan.* xii. 10; xi. 35. When he " hath tried me, I ſhall come forth as Gold; *Job* xxiii. 10. I will refine them as " Silver is refined, and will try them as Gold is tried; *Zach.* xiii. 9. For God " proved them, and found them worthy for himſelf: As Gold in the furnace " has he tried them, and received them as a burnt-offering; *Wiſd.* iii. 5. *And* " *from hence in the* New Teſtament; That the Trial of your Faith, *ſaith St.* " Peter, being much more precious than of Gold that periſheth, though it " be tried with Fire, might be found unto Praiſe and Honour and Glory, at " the appearing of Jeſus Chriſt; 1 *Pet.* i. 7. *And* Jam. i. 12; Bleſſed is the " man that endureth Temptation; for when he is tried, he ſhall receive the " Crown of Life." By *Temptations* therefore of All kinds, is the Sincerity of mens Virtue diſtinguiſhed in the *preſent* life. But becauſe none but God, who ſeeth the Heart, can with certainty judge of this Sincerity; therefore the perfect and total Separation of the Good and the Bad, cannot be made before the day of Judgment. According to That declaration of the Houſeholder in our Lord's Parable: At preſent, ſays he, let them alone; " leſt, while ye gather " up the Tares, ye root up alſo the Wheat with them. Let Both grow toge-" ther until the Harveſt; And in the time of Harveſt I will ſay to the Rea-" pers, Gather ye together firſt the Tares, and bind them in bundles to burn " them; but gather the Wheat into my Barn; *Matt.* xiii. 29. *The application* " *of which ſimilitude, we have at ver.* 40; In the end of the world, *ſaith our* " *Lord*, the Son of man ſhall ſend forth his Angels, and they ſhall gather out " of his Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and " ſhall caſt them into a furnace of Fire; there ſhall be wailing, and gnaſhing " of Teeth. Then ſhall the righteous ſhine forth as the Sun, in the Kingdom " of their Father.

III. *Thirdly*; From what has been ſaid in this whole Diſcourſe, concerning the eſſential and unalterable difference of *Good* and *Evil*, expreſſed here under the ſimilitude of *Wheat* and *Chaff*; and concerning its being the Great End and Deſign of the Goſpel, to *ſeparate* the *Good* from the *Bad*, in the *preſent* ſtate as far as may be, and in the *future* ſtate entirely: From hence (I ſay) ariſes *One* obvious and general Inference, of great Extent and of the higheſt Importance; That whatever Doctrine in Religion has any Tendency to perſwade men, or make them imagine, that they can be in any degree the *Better* for their Profeſſion of the Goſpel of Chriſt, any otherwiſe than as their Knowledge of the

the Goſpel of Chriſt makes them to be *Better* and more virtuous men; that is, in the language of my Text, whatever tends to perſwade men that *Chaff* may paſs for *Wheat*, while it continues to be only *Chaff*; is a direct *Mockery* of *God*, and *Deceit* upon *Themſelves*. Of This kind are *all* Notions, upon which a *vicious* man may build Expectations of being *Saved* by any ſecret *Decree* and *Foreappointment* of *God*, or by the *Merits* of *Chriſt*, or by the *Interceſſion* of *Saints*, or by the *Sacraments* of the *Church*, or by the *Abſolution* of the *Prieſt*, or by the *Orthodoxy* and *Strength* of his own *Faith*, or by the *Firmneſs* of his *Adherence* to any particular *Sect*, or by his *Reliance* upon the *Mercy* and *Goodneſs* of *God*, or by the *ineffectual* Sorrow of a *Death-bed Repentance*, or by *Any* other *Means* that may be invented or imagined to ſupply the Want of the *One thing neceſſary*, which is a *Virtuous Life* in Obedience to God's Commands. *Little children*, ſays the Apoſtle, *let no man deceive you: He that Doth Righteouſneſs is Righteous.* SERM. XLII.

SERMON XLIII.

Scripture-Evidence ſufficient to make Men Religious.

LUK. xvi. 31.

And he ſaid unto him, If they hear not Moſes and the Prophets, neither will they be perſwaded though one roſe from the Dead.

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WHETHER the Infidelity of men, be the ſecret cauſe of their wicked lives; or whether on the contrary, their Reſolution not to amend their Lives, be the cauſe of their perſiſting in their Infidelity, and that they deſire not to be convinced of the truth and of the neceſſity of Religion; is not eaſy to determine: He that impartially conſiders the Evidence of true and uncorrupt Religion, and how ſatisfactory it is to all reaſonable and unprejudiced minds; will be apt think, that men *could not* poſſibly reſiſt its powerful and convictive proofs, were it not that being by cu-

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ſtom captivated and enſlaved to Sin, they are reſolved before-hand not to hearken to any Thing, that will oblige them to forſake their accuſtomed Vices: On the other Hand, he who conſiders what manner of Perſons a true Senſe of Piety would make Men; what an influence Religion muſt of neceſſity have upon their Minds and Lives, if it were ſincerely and ſteddily believed; will be apt to conclude, there could not poſſibly be ſo much Wickedneſs and Debauchery in the World, as he every day beholds; but that Men do not in earneſt believe, as they pretend and profeſs to do, the great Doctrines of Religion. For though Faith has not the Evidence of Senſe; as indeed it is impoſſible it ſhould; yet, if it be well grounded, it could not but have in many reſpects the ſame effect upon mens Lives, as the Evidence even of Senſe itſelf would have. It is not poſſible that rational Creatures ſhould act ſo careleſsly as they do, if they *believed* and conſidered that the Scene of this World ſhall not be ſhut up in everlaſting Oblivion; but, that there will certainly come a Day, wherein they muſt give account for their Works, and be accordingly happy or miſerable for ever. *Faith* therefore, is that which the Rich man in the Parable, thought to be the only *poſſible* cauſe of his Brethren's Irreligion; He thought they had not upon their Minds a full Conviction of the Truth of a Future State; and therefore he ſays to *Abraham* ver. 27; *I pray thee therefore Father, that thou wouldſt ſend Lazarus to my father's houſe; for I have five brethren; that he may teſtify unto them, leſt they alſo come into this place of torment.* And thus far his Argument was unqueſtionably right; that the true reaſon why his Brethren continued in ſuch a ſinful courſe, as would at laſt prove deſtructive to them without Repentance and Amendment; was their not ſufficiently conſidering the Certainty of a Future State; nor having imprinted upon their Minds a juſt and due Senſe of thoſe Rewards and Puniſhments, which were therein to be diſpenſed. We muſt ſuppoſe them to be ſuch Perſons, as the Rich man himſelf is in the former part of the Parable deſcribed to have been; *cloathed in purple and fine linnen, and faring ſumptuouſly every day*; *i. e.* ſuch Perſons as living in the abundant Enjoyment of the good things of this preſent World, had ſet their Hearts and Affections wholly upon theſe things, without any regard to the intereſt of Truth or Virtue, of Religion or Good Manners. And this was indeed a manner of Living, which muſt unavoidably be the cauſe of their final Ruin; and bring *Them* alſo into that place of Torment, into which the ſame courſe of Life had before brought their rich Brother; unleſs they could by ſome Means or other be warned of their approaching Danger, and put in mind that for all theſe things, God would certainly bring them into Judgment. Thus far therefore the Rich man's Plea was undoubtedly juſt; that the true Reaſon, why his Brethren were in danger of following him into that place of Torment, was their not being ſufficiently convinced of the Certainty, and not duly conſidering the Greatneſs of that Danger: But then that the ſending *Lazarus* to teſtify unto them; *i. e.* that the ſending one on purpoſe from the Dead, to aſſure them of the Certainty of a Future State, would be ſufficient to convince and reform thoſe Men, who could not be worked upon by theſe Diſcoveries and Declarations which God had already made both by Reaſon and Revelation concerning this matter; herein was his Miſtake. For ſo we find *Abraham* anſwering his importunate Requeſt, in the Words of the Text; *If they hear not Moſes and the Prophets; neither will they be perſwaded though one roſe from the dead*; *i. e.* if they be ſo immerſed in the ſinful Pleaſures of this preſent World, as not to be concerned about the Certainty of a Future State, and of the Puniſhments which ſhall therein be inflicted on all impenitent Sinners; nor be convinced of it by the Revelations which God has already made: If they be ſo hardened in their Folly, that they can continue deaf to the continual Preachings, the repeated Threatnings and Promiſes, the earneſt Exhortations, and the conſtant Warnings of their Danger, which God vouchſafes unto them by his Servants the Prophets; and thoſe confirmed and ſtrengthened by the Reaſon of things, by the Dictates

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of Conſcience, by the Judgment of all Wiſe men, and by the perpetual Providences of God; it is plain they would for the ſame reaſon reject all other Means whatſoever, that God ſhould make uſe of for their Conviction and Reformation; even though he ſhould ſend one on purpoſe from the Dead, to preach to them. The deſign therefore of our Saviour in this Parable, is plainly This; *to ſhow us* that the true Reaſon of that Infidelity, which cauſes Men to continue in a Courſe of Sin, is not either want of real Evidence to prove the great Truths of Religion, or want of ſufficient Arguments to enforce the practice of it; but merely ſuch an affectionate Love of the World, and of its ſinful *Pleaſures*; as darkens their Underſtanding, biaſſes their Will, clouds their Reaſon, and blinds their Eyes, that they cannot diſcern even the cleareſt Light. *Their fooliſh heart is darkened*, as St. *Paul* elegantly expreſſes it, *Rom.* i. 21; *and the God of this world has blinded their minds, leſt the light of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt, who is the image of God, ſhould ſhine unto them*; 2 Cor. iv. 4. From the Words of the Text therefore, I ſhall endeavour theſe three things; *1ſt*, To ſhow that God has given us ſufficient *Evidence* to prove the *Truth* of Religion, and ſufficient *Arguments* to enforce the *Practice* of it. *2dly*, That ſuch Men as will not be perſwaded to be religious, by *that* Evidence and *thoſe* Motives which God has afforded us, would not be perſwaded by any *other* Evidence or Arguments of Religion, which their own unreaſonable fancy could ſuggeſt to them to deſire; And *3dly*, That therefore in order to the making Men truly religious, it is not neceſſary that *God* ſhould on *his* part work more Miracles to give them greater Convictions; but only that *They* on *their* part ſhould lay aſide their unjuſt Prejudices, and forſake their unreaſonable Luſts, which hinder them from conſidering the true Force of the Arguments of Religion.

I. *Firſt*; God has given us ſufficient Evidence to prove the *Truth* of Religion, and ſufficient *Arguments* to enforce the Practice of it. And here it is to be obſerved, that the deſign of Religion being to bring Men to Happineſs, by making them holy and virtuous; *i. e.* to make Happineſs not the Fate of Men's Nature, but the Reward of their Duty; it is plain the Arguments of Religion ought in the Nature of the Thing, to be ſuch as might abundantly encourage all Wiſe Men, to adhere ſtedfaſtly to their Duty as to their Life, and yet at the ſame time leave room for Men utterly incorrigible, to avoid being forced into the Poſſeſſion of that Happineſs, which they are not willing to purchaſe upon the Terms of being Religious. The Reward of Everlaſting Life promiſed to Obedience, and the Puniſhment of Eternal Miſery threatned to Diſobedience, are Motives in themſelves irreſiſtibly ſtrong: and, if they were preſent and immediate, could not be withſtood, nor leave any room for Liberty and Choice. Wherefore, though the infinitely gracious and merciful God has indeed propoſed to us theſe great and moſt powerful Arguments; that Men by chooſing their Duty might chooſe their Life, and become Happy in conſequence of their being truly Religious; yet hath he ſo propoſed them, inviſible at preſent and at a diſtance; that Good Men might have ſome Exerciſe of their Virtue, by chooſing their Duty in order *to*, and as a natural Preparation *for*, their Eternal Happineſs; and that Men obſtinately impenitent might not (as indeed they *cannot*) partake of the Happineſs, without chooſing the Duty to which that Happineſs is both by the Appointment of *God* and by the Nature of *things themſelves* inſeparably annexed. Now this being premiſed; I ſay, God *has* given us all that *evidence* to prove the *Truth* of the Chriſtian Religion, and all thoſe *Arguments* to enforce the *Practice* of it, which it was agreeable either to the *Wiſdom* of *God* to give, or the *Reaſon* of *Men* to expect. He has given all the *intrinſick* Evidence from the Excellency of the Nature of the Thing itſelf, that is poſſible to be conceived; and all the *external* Proof from unqueſtionable Teſtimony, that was ever given to any matter of Fact in the World.

1ſt; As

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1*ſt*; As to the *intrinſick* Evidence from the Excellency of the Nature of the thing itſelf; The Duties which the Chriſtian Religion requires, are ſuch as are plainly moſt agreeable to our natural Notions of *God*, and moſt conducive to the Happineſs and well-Being of *Men*; And this is a Proof which might alone be ſufficient, to convince a Wiſe Man, that his Religion was from God; For that Religion which enjoyns no other Duties, but what are perfectly agreeable to the Eternal and Unchangeable Laws of *God* and *Nature*, and that manifeſtly tend to promote *Virtue and Goodneſs* only, which is the true Happineſs of Men; ſuch a Religion has already the Character of God upon it, and cannot poſſibly but either directly come from him, or at leaſt be acceptable and agreeable to him. A Religion which ſtands on ſuch a foundation, does ſufficiently recommend itſelf, even by its own *intrinſick* Excellency, to the belief and practice of all wiſe and conſiderate Men.

Now that the Chriſtian Religion, in its native ſimplicity; the Goſpel or Doctrine of Chriſt, ſeparate from the Miſtakes and Corruptions and uncertain Comments of Men, is ſuch an Inſtitution; is evident from the whole Frame and Temper of the Goſpel, "Whatſoever things are True, whatſoever things are Honeſt. whatſoever things are Juſt, whatſoever things "are Pure, whatſoever things are Lovely, whatſoever things are of good "Report; if there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praiſe;" theſe are the Things in which the true Spirit of Chriſtianity conſiſts. And as to the principal *Motives* or *Arguments* of the Goſpel, Namely, the certainty of a future State, and the Rewards and Puniſhments therein to be diſpenſed; theſe things are ſo exactly ſuitable to the Juſtice and Wiſdom of God, according to the beſt Notions we can frame of his Attributes; and ſo agreeable to the natural Apprehenſions and Expectations of *Men*, that there is nothing in Nature, of things removed from Senſe, more credible and probable in itſelf to unprejudiced and impartial Reaſon. That the Soul of Man is immortal, and ſhall ſurvive after the Diſſolution of this corruptible Body; is a truth which has always been thought even naturally demonſtrable, from principles of the beſt Philoſophy. That Man is a Creature capable of doing Good or Evil, and conſequently of giving account of his Actions, and being judged, rewarded, or puniſhed for them; is alſo very evident to Reaſon: That therefore, ſince the mixt Diſpenſations of Providence in *this* World make no ſuch Difference, therefore that *future* Life muſt be a State of retribution, wherein every Man ſhall receive of God according *to what he has done in the fleſh, whether it be good or evil*; all This has been collected by the wiſer and more conſiderate part of Men even among the Heathens themſelves. So credible and probable are theſe things to the unprejudiced judgment of mankind, even of themſelves in their own Nature, without any external Evidence to confirm that probability. But then

2*dly*; Beſides the intrinſick Evidence for the Truth of Religion, from the Excellency of the Nature of the thing itſelf; it is moreover proved to be taught and confirmed of God, by the moſt credible and ſatisfactory teſtimony that was ever given to any matter of fact in the World. The *Miracles* which our Saviour worked, were to his firſt Diſciples, who were Eye-witneſſes of them, a complete demonſtration of the Truth of his Doctrine; And the Hiſtory of his Life, Death, and Reſurrection, delivered down to us upon the teſtimony of thoſe Diſciples, are to *us* alſo a ſufficient and moſt undeniable Evidence of the ſame Truth. "Their having "converſed from the beginning, with our Saviour himſelf; their having "heard with their Ears, and ſeen with their Eyes; their having looked "upon, and having handled with their Hands, of the word of Life," (as St. *John* expreſſes it, 1 *Joh.* i. 1.) made it impoſſible that they ſhould be deceived *themſelves*: And their whole Life and Converſation, their Sufferings

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and Deaths, were demonſtrative proofs againſt the Adverſaries of Chriſtianity, that they had no deſign of impoſing upon *others*. They ſaw all the Prophecies of the *Old Teſtament* preciſely fulfilled in the Life and Doctrine, in the Sufferings and Death, of our Bleſſed Saviour; They ſaw him confirm what he taught with ſuch mighty Works, as his bittereſt and moſt malicious Enemies could not but confeſs to be above the power of Nature even while they were blaſpheming that holy Spirit which worked them; They ſaw the whole courſe of his Life to be ſuch, as to all unprejudiced beholders brightly ſhowed forth his Divine Commiſſion; They ſaw him ſo conſtantly deſpiſe all worldly Greatneſs, that once when the People would have attempted to make him a King, he even worked a Miracle to avoid That, which was the only Thing that was poſſible to be the Aim and Deſign of an Impoſtor; In fine, they ſaw him alive after his Paſſion by many infallible Proofs, converſing with him for forty Days together, and at laſt beholding him aſcend viſibly into Heaven. Theſe were ſuch Demonſtrations of his being a Teacher ſent from Heaven, and conſequently that his Doctrine was no other than an expreſs Revelation of the Will of God, that nothing but the extremeſt Malice and Obſtinacy could withſtand them.

And Now the ſame Reaſon that theſe Diſciples of our Saviour had to receive *his* Doctrine, the reſt of the World had to receive *theirs*: *They* confirmed what they taught by Signs and Miracles; *they* lived according to the Doctrine they preached, though manifeſtly contrary to all the Intereſts and Pleaſures of this preſent World; and which no Deceivers could do, they died freely and deliberately, with all imaginable chearfulneſs and joy of Mind, for the Teſtimony of their Doctrine and the Confirmation of their Religion: *Their* Doctrine (I ſay) and *their* Religion, as it lies in the plain Simplicity of Scripture, eaſy and intelligible even to the meaneſt Capacity; ſeparate from the Difficulties which vain and contentious Men have ſince mingled with it. It is true, the Miracles of Chriſt, and particularly his Reſurrection, which was the greateſt of all, is not ſuch an ocular Demonſtration to After-generations, as it was to thoſe men, who then *lived* and *ſaw him*, and *converſed* with him: But then on the other Side, in ſome reſpects we have the Advantage even of *Them*; We have the Examination of many Ages, the Anſwers to the Objections of all ſorts of Adverſaries, the Judgment of the wiſeſt and moſt conſiderate Men that have gone before us, and the Evidence of ſeveral of our Lord's Prophecies ſince that time fulfilled: So that upon the whole, it is evident whoever is not convinced by the Arguments we Now have, of the Truth of Religion; would not be *convinced*, by any *other* proof or demonſtration whatſoever. And This is the

II. *Second* general propoſition I deſigned to ſpeak to; Namely, That ſuch Men as will not be perſwaded to be ſincerely Religious, by that Evidence and thoſe Arguments which God has afforded us; would not be perſwaded by any *other* Evidence or Motive of Religion, which their own unreaſonable Fancy could ſuggeſt to them to deſire. *If they hear not Moſes and the Prophets, neither would they be perſwaded though one roſe from the dead.* And the Reaſon hereof is plainly this: The true cauſe why any ſuch wicked Man neglects and disbelieves the great Truths of Religion, is not that theſe Things want ſufficient Evidence to convince his Judgment, (for then he would not believe and act upon *other* grounds that have *leſs* proof, as every Man plainly does in his worldly Buſineſs;) but it is becauſe his paſſions and affections are intereſted, and that his Heart is ſet upon the ſinful Enjoyments of this preſent World; It is for *This* Reaſon that he is willing to ſhake off the Thoughts of ſuch Truths, as are contrary to theſe falſe Intereſts and unreaſonable Affections. Did Men follow the unprejudiced Reaſon of their own Minds, a ſmall *poſſibility* of obtaining eternal Happineſs, or the leaſt appearing *hazard* of falling into endleſs or

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lasting Misery, would immediately determine them to make it the great busi- SERM.
ness of their Lives, to obtain the One and avoid the Other. Wherefore XLIII.
when we see Men act directly contrary to this natural Principle, and almost wholly neglect these most important of all Things, not only when there is a great appearance of their *possibility*, but when there is moreover all reasonable positive Evidence of their being *certainly true*; is it not manifest that such Persons are guided, not by reason and the force of Evidence, but by blind passion and unreasonable affection? And where this affection and love for the sinful pleasures of the World is so strong, as to cause Men to despise the Authority both of Reason and Scripture in conjunction; to elude the clearest and most undeniable Evidence of matter of Fact; to become deaf to all the Promises and Threatnings, the Perswasions and Terrours of the Gospel; to disregard all the kind Warnings that God gives them by his Spirit, and by his Ministers, by his Mercies and his Judgments, and by all the Dispensations of his Providence; there is little doubt but the same Persons would resist any *other* means, that should be made use of for their Conversion and Reformation. We are many of us willing perhaps to imagine, that if we had lived in our Saviour's time, if we had heard his Preaching and seen his Miracles, if we had had the Advantage of beholding those mighty Works which he performed for the Proof of his divine Commission, as the *Jews* then had; we should not like them have rejected the Counsel of God against ourselves, but with all chearfulness have believed his Doctrine and embraced his Religion; We may be apt to fancy, we should have immediately become Disciples of Christ, and that the Truths which he taught would have had a powerful influence upon the whole course of our lives. But all this, is a very great Fallacy; and if the Arguments of Religion *Now* have no influence upon us, we should *Then* likewise as certainly have found out Evasions to elude them. The *Jews* are a lasting Instance, how far prejudice and affection are able to prevail over the strongest Convictions. When our Saviour began to preach that he was sent from God to instruct them in their Duty, they required a *Sign* of him and they *would* believe him; but when he had worked so many Miracles, that even the World itself could not contain the Books if they should all be written, they still persisted in their Infidelity: When they saw him hanging upon the Cross, and thought themselves secure of him, they said, *Let him now come down from the Cross and we* will *believe him*; But when he arose out of the Grave wherein he had lain three Days, which was a much greater and more convincing Miracle; they grew more hardened and obstinate in their Unbelief. And reasonably may we believe, if we live wickedly *Now*; that the same would have been *our* Case, if we had lived in those Days.

Should God *Now* send a messenger from the Dead to assure Men of the certainty of a future State, and the Danger of their present Wickedness; As soon as their present terrible Apprehensions were ceased, it is extremely probable they would find some way or other to ascribe it all to the Delusion of Fancy and Imagination; and that their old vicious Habits and beloved Sins would again by degrees prevail over them. Wherefore

III. *Thirdly*, and to conclude; In order to the making Men truly Religious, it is not necessary that God should on *his* part work more Miracles to give them greater Convictions; but only that They on their *own* part should become reasonable Persons; lay aside their unjust prejudices, and forsake their unreasonable Lusts, which hinder them from considering the true force of the Arguments of Religion. They have no concern for the Interests of Truth and Virtue; The love of this present World has blinded their Eyes; and 'tis for That Reason only, that they *receive not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto them*; 1 Cor. ii. 14. The Sum of all therefore is; Let us take Care to free ourselves from those unreasonable prejudices, wherewith carelessness and want of consideration, and unrighteous Practice are used to blind us; and then we shall soon be convinced, of the Truth and of the

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The Scripture a ſufficient Rule of Religion.

2 TIM. iii. 16.

All Scripture is given by inſpiration of God; and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs.

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THE Apoſtle in the Beginning of this Chapter gives notice to *Timothy*, of certain *Falſe Teachers*, who ſhould ariſe after the Apoſtles days, and by their erroneous Doctrines ſhould corrupt the Simplicity of the Goſpel of Chriſt. The *Token* by which theſe Falſe Teachers might certainly be known, *our Saviour himſelf* had before laid down: *By their* Fruits (ſays he) *ye ſhall know them.* And accordingly *St. Paul here* deſcribes them, from the Tendency of their Behaviour and Practice, ver. 4; *Lovers of Pleaſures, more than Lovers of God; Having a Form of Godlineſs, but denying the Power thereof*; That is, laying the Streſs of Religion always upon *Other* things, than *true Virtue.* His *Own* Behaviour on the *contrary*, he appeals to *Timothy*'s *perſonal* Knowledge of it, how unblameable it was, and

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agreeable to the true Chriſtian Spirit: *But thou haſt fully known* (ſays he) My *Doctrine, manner of life, purpoſe, faith, long-ſuffering, charity, patience*; ver. 10. As to perſons of *vicious* and *corrupt* Diſpoſitions, Theſe (ſays he) *evil men and ſeducers, ſhall wax worſe and worſe, deceiving and being deceived*; ver. 13: But how a ſerious and well-diſpoſed mind, ſuch as *Timothy*'s was, ſhould be ſure to eſcape all danger of being miſled; he proceeds to ſhow, ver. 14; "But con- "tinue *Thou (ſays he)* in the things which thou haſt learned, and haſt been aſ- "ſured of; knowing of whom thou haſt learned them; and that from a child "thou haſt known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wiſe unto "Salvation, through Faith which is in Chriſt Jeſus." The certain way for him to avoid all Errour and Deceit, was to hearken to no additions of humane invention, but to continue ſtedfaſt in the Simplicity of That Doctrine which he had received from *St. Paul* himſelf, and which by comparing it with the Scriptures of the *Old Teſtament*, he had been aſſured was true. 'Tis very remarkable that the Apoſtle, though he appeals to *Timothy*'s *own perſonal* Knowledge of the Authority and Fidelity of his Teacher; *Thou* knoweſt (ſays he) *of whom thou haſt learned*; (He had been inſtructed immediately by *St. Paul himſelf*:) yet for All that, the Apoſtle (I ſay) here *expreſsly* puts the *foundation* of *Timothy*'s Aſſurance of the *Truth*, upon his having examined the Scriptures of the *Old Teſtament*, and ſeen the Apoſtles Doctrine to be founded thereon; "That "from a Child thou haſt known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make "thee Wiſe unto Salvation." He commends *Timothy*, for having ſearched what the Spirit of Chriſt, which was in the *Prophets*, had teſtified beforehand; and profeſſes the Truth of his Own Doctrine, to depend upon its agreeableneſs to what *Timothy* ſhould find delivered in thoſe antient inſpired Writings. And then he adds in the words of the Text: *All Scripture*, that is, All thoſe Books which in the foregoing Verſe he calls *The Holy Scriptures*, the Writings of the Prophets under the Old Teſtament; "are given by inſpiration of God; and "are profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Inſtruction in "Righteouſneſs; That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furniſhed "unto all good Works." They are profitable for *Doctrine*, as containing all *neceſſary Truth*; for *Reproof*, as guarding Men againſt all pernicious *Errours*; for *Correction*, as affording the ſtrongeſt Arguments to perſwade Sinners to *Amend*; and for *Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs*, as directing men in all *virtuous practice*. That the Man of God may be *perfect, thoroughly furniſhed unto all good Works*: That is, that every good Chriſtian, and particularly every Preacher of the Goſpel, may therein find abundant Inſtruction both how to direct his *Own* Practice in the Way of Righteouſneſs, and how to perſwade *Others* alſo to do the like. The *Senſe* is the ſame, as in that Expreſſion of our Saviour, *Matt.* xiii. 52; "Therefore every Scribe which is inſtructed into the Kingdom of "Heaven, is like unto a man that is an Houſeholder, which bringeth forth "out of his Treaſure things New and Old."

In the Original, there is an Ambiguity in the Reading of the Former part of the Text. The Senſe therein expreſſed, is either this; *All Scripture, given by inſpiration of God, is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs.* Or elſe, according to our *preſent* Reading, *All Scripture* is *given by Inſpiration of God*, and *is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs.* But which ſoever of theſe ways the Words be read, it makes no real Alteration in the Doctrine they contain. For if we read the Words thus, *All Scripture, given by inſpiration of God, is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs*; the Propoſition Then, is a *direct* Declaration and Aſſertion, of the Uſefulneſs and Sufficiency of the Inſpired Writings. But if we follow the *Other* Reading of the Words, *All Scripture* is *given by inſpiration of God*, and *is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs*; the doctrine is ſtill *conſequentially* the very ſame: *All Scripture*, that is, as they are ſtiled in the foregoing Verſe, *The Holy Scriptures*, all the Writings of the Prophets in the Old Teſtament, *are given by Inſpiration of God*, that is, they are

not

not the mere Conceptions and reaſonings of the Prophet's own mind, were written under the direction and influence of the Spirit of God; and *therefore* they are *profitable* and *ſufficient*, to all the Purpoſes of true Religion and Virtue. The very ſame argument is uſed by *St. Peter*, 2 Pet. i. 19; *We have alſo* (ſays he) *a more ſure word of Prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a Light that ſhineth in a dark place;—Knowing this firſt, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation*, (the words in the Original are, *no prophecy of the Scripture is of the perſon's* own *private utterance*, It is not the mere *Thought and Conception of the Writer's own Mind:*) *For the Prophecy came not in old time by the Will of Man; but Holy Men of God, ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt.* The Phraſe, *No Prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation*, has moſt ridiculouſly by the Church of *Rome* been alledged to prove, that *private men* ought not to take upon them to *underſtand the Scripture*: Whereas from the expreſs words of the Apoſtle immediately following, it moſt manifeſtly appears, that the word *private* is not here ſpoken of the *Readers*, but of the *Writers* of the Propheeies: The Prophets wrote, not the Suggeſtions of their *own private Thoughts*, but *as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt.* And this is exactly what St. *Paul* affirms in the Text; *All Scripture, is given by inſpiration of God*; It is not the mere private conceptions of mens own minds, but was written under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit.

It has been matter of great Diſpute among Learned Men in all Ages, *wherein* conſiſted the preciſe Notion of the *inſpiration* of Scripture; and how far the inſpired Authors of the ſacred Writings, did or did not expreſs their *Own* Thoughts, and in their *Own* words. [I think] the want of Clearneſs that has generally appeared in what has been written upon this Subject, has chiefly ariſen from not carefully diſtinguiſhing between the *Prophetick* Writings, and thoſe *other* parts of Scripture which are merely *Hiſtorical* or *Moral*. In the *Prophetick* Writings, where the whole Subject matter was entirely *New* to the Prophet himſelf, and very often perhaps *not underſtood* by him; it is very plain that *inſpiration* neceſſarily means, that the whole was dictated to the inſpired Writer, either in a Viſion, or by an Angel, or otherwiſe, according as it pleaſed God to reveal himſelf at divers times and in diverſe manners. But in the *Hiſtorical* and *Moral* Books of Scripture, wherein the Writers had themſelves perfect *Knowledge* of the *Facts* recorded, and perfect *Underſtanding* of the *Doctrines* taught; it was abundantly ſufficient, that they had ſuch Aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit guiding them into all Truth, as inabled them to expreſs their own Thoughts in their own Words, with an effectual Security that they ſhould not err in the manner of delivering the Doctrine they were commanded to teach. Of This diſtinction we have a remarkable Inſtance given us by St. *Paul* himſelf; 1 Cor. vii. In *One* caſe, I *command*, (ſaith he,) *yet not I, but the Lord*, ver. 10. In *Another* caſe, *To the reſt* (ſays he,) *ſpeak I, not the Lord*; ver. 12; For: *I have no Commandment of the Lord; yet I give my judgment, as one that has obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful*; ver. 25: Such a one *is happier, after my judgment; and I think alſo that I have the Spirit of God*; ver. 40.

In *One* or the *Other* of theſe two Senſes of the word *inſpiration*, the *general* aſſertion in the Text is by the *Apoſtle* intended to be applied *ſeverally* to all the Books of the *Old Teſtament*; And by *analogy* of reaſon, it is by *Us* upon the very ſame account applicable likewiſe to the Writings of the *New Teſtament*. *All Scripture is given by inſpiration of God; and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs.*

The words of the Text being thus explained, the Doctrine contained in them is in brief the aſſertion of the *Sufficiency of Scripture*, as a *Rule* both of *Faith and Practice* in matters of Religion. In diſcourſing upon which Subject, I ſhall 1*ſt* endeavour to ſet forth diſtinctly the true Notion of the Doctrine itſelf, of the Scriptures being a ſufficient Rule of Faith and Manners. 2*dly*, I ſhall conſider the Grounds, upon which the Church of *Rome*, and Others who in any meaſure follow their Example, diſallow this Doctrine both in their Practice and Arguments. And 3*dly*, I ſhall draw ſome uſeful Obſervations from the whole,

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I. *Firſt*; I ſhall endeavour to ſet forth diſtinctly the true Notion of the Doctrine itſelf, of the *Scriptures* being a *ſufficient Rule* of Faith and Manners. There are *two*, and *two only*, ways by which the Will of God is or can be made known to Men; And Theſe are, *Reaſon* and *Revelation*. They are each of them perfect in their kind, and each of them ſufficient to the purpoſes they were intended. *Reaſon* is the *only* and *ſufficient* Rule, of things that are to be judged of by *Reaſon*; and *Scripture* is the *only* and *ſufficient* Rule, of things that are to be judged of by *Revelation*. If This were not ſo; both *Reaſon and Scripture* would be altogether *uſeleſs*, nay *hurtful*, to the greater part of mankind. For if in matters of mere *Reaſon*, every man was not to be directed by his *Reaſon*, but by ſome *Other Guide*; it would follow that his *Reaſon* could be of no other uſe to him, than to perplex and confound the directions of that *Other Guide*. And if in matters of *Revelation*, every man was not to be directed by the words of the *Revelation itſelf*, but by ſome *Other Inſtructor*; it would evidently and neceſſarily follow, that the Uſe of the Scriptures could be of no Benefit to him, but, on the contrary, only an Impediment to him in his obeying That *Other Inſtructor*. It is true, the *Degrees* of Reaſon, are very different in different men; and very often, what a man's *own reaſon* does not enable him to apprehend, may eaſily be made appear to him by the aſſiſtance of *Another*, who has Superiour Underſtanding; And when it is *ſo* made clear to him, it is *then* as much his *own* as if he had diſcovered it *himſelf*; and is as *truly* an Act of his *own Reaſon*: But if he was bound by the mere Authority of Another's Superiour Underſtanding, to *judge* That to be *reaſonable*, which after the utmoſt explication That Other perſon could give him, he could not yet *perceive* to be *reaſonable*; he would manifeſtly be bound to an *abſurdity and impoſſibility*. In like manner, mens *abilities* of judging concerning matters of *Revelation*, are indeed very different; and many Doctrines of Scripture, which perſons of mean capacities would not *without Any inſtruction* underſtand, may eaſily be made very evident to Them by Thoſe of greater Abilities. And when once they are *ſo* made evident to them, they are *then* as *truly* evident to the perſons *own* underſtandings, as if they had *of themſelves* underſtood them without Any Inſtruction. But if any Perſon was bound, by the mere Authority of another man's greater Capacity or Underſtanding, to *perceive* any thing to be *injoyned in Scripture* as a *Condition of Salvation*, which, after all the Proofs which That Other perſon was able to alledge, he could not at laſt *perceive* to be There *ſo injoyned*; it would follow neceſſarily and manifeſtly, that he was obliged to *two contradictory things at once*. When therefore Proteſtants affirm with St. *Paul*, that the Scripture is a ſufficient Rule both of Faith and Practice, in matters of Religion; the Meaning is not, that the World ſtands in no need of *Living Inſtructors*; but that the Scriptures do ſo clearly and diſtinctly expreſs all the things which are therein declared to be the general Terms and Conditions of Salvation, that perſons even of the *meaneſt* capacities, when they are *ſhown and taught* them, can clearly and diſtinctly *ſee and perceive* that they are *indeed* declared by Chriſt and his Apoſtles to be the Conditions of Salvation. Beyond which, if it were needful or lawful for Chriſtians to be perſwaded, that there are ſtill *Other things* appointed of Chriſt as Terms of Salvation, which not only they *themſelves* are not able to diſcover, but even *after* they are *taught them* they can yet by no means ſee and perceive to be commanded in Scripture; If Chriſtians (I ſay) were to be perſwaded of Any *ſuch* things, the only *poſſible* Uſe of ſuch *Perſwaſion*, would be either to confirm them in *confident ignorance*, or to promote the practice of ſome *Wickedneſs*, or to introduce ſomething by way of *equivalent* or *Commutation* in the ſtead of True *Virtue and Holineſs of Life*.

Having therefore thus explained briefly the true Notion of the *Doctrine itſelf*, of the Scripture's being a ſufficient Rule both of Faith and Practice in matters of Religion; I proceed now in the

II. *Second* place, To conſider the Grounds, upon which the Church of *Rome*, and Others who in any meaſure follow Their Example, diſallow this Doctrine both in their Practice and Arguments. Their

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First Ground, is; that the *Scriptures themſelves* are conveyed down to us, only by *Tradition*; and conſequently it cannot be, but that the *ſame Tradition*, on which the *Scriptures themſelves* depend, muſt be in *Other* matters as good a Rule of Faith, as the Scriptures which are delivered down to us by That Tradition. This is their Argument in its full Strength. And were there *indeed* any *unwritten* Precepts of Chriſt delivered down to us by the ſame Tradition as the *written* ones are; they would all, without doubt, be of the ſame Authority. But this is manifeſtly both *Falſe* in *Fact*, and *impoſſible* in *the nature of the Thing*. For *unwritten* Doctrines, conveyed by *verbal* Tradition, every one knows, are unavoidably *miſtaken*, *changed*, *diverſified*, *loſt*, in *every ſtep* of conveyance, not only from one *generation*, but even from one *perſon*, to another. But a *Book written*, (in *This*, as in *Other* caſes,) may be delivered down *from generation to generation*: And the Hiſtory of every Age from That time to This, and the *Citations* of Scripture made in all Times upon every occaſion, both by *Friends* and *Enemies*, by thoſe who *owned* and by thoſe who *diſowned* the Authority of Chriſt; are Atteſtations to the *Fact*, that theſe Books *do* contain the *Doctrine* of Chriſt. The

Second Ground, upon which the Church of *Rome* denies the *Scripture* to be a ſufficient *Rule of Faith*, is the *Difficulty* of *underſtanding* its *True Meaning*; which therefore they think the generality of Chriſtians are not capable to judge of, and conſequently that they muſt needs depend upon the Judgment of Others. Which if it were really ſo, it would clearly follow that there could not poſſibly be any ſuch thing as *Chriſtianity* at all; but that *Religion* would be merely the ſeveral *Laws* or *Cuſtoms*, of the Countries wherein they reſpectively prevailed. The *Truth* therefore, on the contrary, is evidently *This*. The things that are *declared in Scripture* to be the *Terms and Conditions of Salvation*; (I ſay, *not the Whole* Scripture, Types and Prophecies, and occaſional determinations of controverſial Points; but the Principles, as St. *Paul* ſtiles them, *of the Doctrine of Chriſt*; the Milk *of the Word*, the things *neceſſarily* to be *believed* and *practiſed* by *every one* who is baptized and profeſſes himſelf a Chriſtian, the things *declared in Scripture* to be the *Terms and Conditions of Salvation*;) namely, *Repentance* from all wicked works, and *Faith* towards *God* and our *Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; the Belief of a *Reſurrection from the Dead*, and of a *judgment to come*; and a *Life* of *Virtue*, or *ſuitable Obedience* to our Lord's *expreſs Commands* in the Goſpel; *Theſe* things are ſo clearly required, and ſo diſtinctly ſet forth in Holy Scripture, that it is impoſſible for any *ſerious* perſon not to underſtand them; at leaſt no man, even of the *meaneſt* capacity, when theſe are *ſhown* and *taught* him out of the Scriptures, can poſſibly fail to ſee that they are *really there*; and that he *is not* impoſed upon, when he is told they *are* ſo. But whatſoever is in its own nature abſtruſe and difficult, (ſuch as are ſome *Prophetick* Paſſages in St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles relating to the End of the World; in which *matters*, not in which *Epiſtles*, St. *Peter* ſaith there are *ſome things hard to be underſtood*;) whatſoever, I ſay, is of ſo abſtruſe a nature, that a perſon of mean capacity can neither *of himſelf*, nor by means of any *inſtruction* given him, be able clearly to underſtand it; ſuch a thing cannot poſſibly be neceſſary to be *underſtood*, by *That particular Perſon*. And whatſoever a ſincere perſon of mean capacity, can neither *himſelf* find to be required in Scripture, nor, by ſeriouſly and carefully attending to the *beſt Inſtruction*, can convince and ſatisfy himſelf that it is there commanded; it cannot poſſibly be the Duty of that perſon, to pretend to believe that *it is* commanded There. All things of *This* kind, are what St. *Paul* calls *unlearned Queſtions*, 2 Tim. ii. 23; that is, Doctrines which were never *learnt* by a Chriſtian at his inſtruction in Chriſtianity, when he was taught the things neceſſary to make him a true Diſciple of Chriſt, when he was taught the things required in the Goſpel as the Terms and Conditions of Salvation. From all which it moſt evidently appears, that when St. *Peter* ſays, *no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation*; his meaning is not, (as the *Romaniſts* pretend) that *private* perſons are not to underſtand the Scripture, as well as *publick* ones; but that (as I before obſerved,) the Books of Scripture contain, not

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the private *Sentiments* of the Writers *own* Minds, but the *Doctrines taught them by the* Spirit of God. That which remains, is, in the

III. *Third* and *Laſt* place, to draw ſome uſeful Inferences and Obſervations from the whole. And

1*ſt*, From what has been ſaid, it is manifeſt, that in all ſucceeding Ages from the days of the Apoſtles; *following the guidance and direction of the Spirit*, is not (as Some have weakly thought,) *following enthuſiaſtick Imaginations*, but *following the directions given in thoſe Scriptures, which were written by Inſpiration of the Spirit of God.*

2*dly*, From hence it follows, that *All perſons*, according to their ſeveral capacities, are obliged to ſtudy the Scriptures; and principally thoſe parts of them, wherein are declared the Terms and Conditions of Salvation. Our *Saviour* exhorts the *Jews*, *John* v. 39, to *ſearch the Scriptures*, as the means of diſcovering the Truth of his Doctrine. St. *Luke*, in his Hiſtory of the *Acts of the Apoſtles*, commends the *Bereans* for *ſearching the Scriptures daily*, to ſee *whether the things* taught them *were ſo* or not. St. *Paul*, in the words before my Text, commends *Timothy* for *having from a child known the Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wiſe unto Salvation.* In his *own* preaching to the *Jews his manner was*, Acts xvii. 2; to *reaſon with them out of the Scriptures.* And to ſuch as had been already converted, he declares, *Rom.* xv. 4, that *whatſoever things were written aforetime: were written for Our Learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

3*dly*, From what has been ſaid, it follows, that as *All* Chriſtians are to make the *plain Scriptures* their *Rule*; ſo They who have *particular* opportunities, and abilities of doing it, may even in the more *difficult* parts thereof find wherewith to enlarge their Knowledge, and confirm their Faith. *We ſpeak Wiſdom*, ſaith St. *Paul, among them that are perfect*; 1 *Cor.* ii. 6. Our Saviour, debating with the *Sadducees* about a captious Queſtion, convinced them that they *erred*, in *not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.* The *Prophets* of old *ſearched what, and what manner of time the Spirit of Chriſt which was in them did ſignify, when it teſtified beforehand the ſufferings of Chriſt, and the glory that ſhould follow.* In *all theſe Scriptures*, our Lord after his Reſurrection *expounded* to his Diſciples, *the things concerning himſelf*; *opening unto them the Scriptures*, and, (by that expoſition) *opening their underſtanding that they might underſtand the Scriptures.* And then *the Myſtery, which had been hid from ages and from generations*, was, *by* the explication of *the Scriptures of the Prophets ready to be made known to all nations*: And the Diſciples, remembring our Lord's *former* Sayings, *John* ii. 22; *believed* (i. e. were confirmed in their Belief of) *the Scriptures, and the words which Jeſus had ſaid.* And thus *We* alſo, by comparing the things delivered in Scripture with the nature of things and the preſent State of the World; may (if we be not wanting to ourſelves,) find great and ſufficient reaſon to be confirmed in our Faith, and amended in our Practice.

SERMON

SERMON XLV.

The Knowledge of Sin is by the Law.

ROM. vii. 7, latter part.

I had not known Luſt, except the Law had ſaid, Thou ſhalt not covet.

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THE Word *Luſt*, in this place, evidently ſignifies *in general*, the *coveting* or *deſiring* any thing *not lawful* to be deſired, or the coveting any *lawful* thing *in ſuch a manner* as is not lawful to obtain it. And therefore the Words ought more properly to have been rendred, *I had not known the* covetous Deſire *of any thing* to be a Sin, *except the Law had ſaid, Thou ſhalt not covet.* In diſcourſing upon which Words, I ſhall endeavour to ſhow, *Firſt*; *Who* the Perſon is, the Apoſtle here ſpeaks of; *I had not known Luſt*. *Secondly*; In what Senſe it is to be underſtood, that the *Knowledge* of any Sin is *by the Law*; *I had not known it, except the* Law *had ſaid*. And *Thirdly*; What is the *Meaning and Extent* of the *particular Law itſelf*, here referred to by the Apoſtle; *Thou ſhalt not Covet*.

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I. In the *First* place, *Who* the Perſon is, the Apoſtle here ſpeaks of, and deſcribes through this whole Chapter; has been a Subject of much Controverſy among Commentators. And it is a matter, of *great importance* to be rightly underſtood; becauſe Notions very pernicious and deſtructive to the Practice of true Virtue, have ariſen from Miſapprehenſions about this very thing. *Some* have underſtood this Chapter *literally*, as if St. *Paul* here ſpoke concerning *himſelf*, and deſcribed his *Own* State and Circumſtances *before his converſion*. But this is manifeſtly impoſſible; becauſe the Character of the Perſon deſcribed in this Chapter, is entirely different from the account St. *Paul* gives of *himſelf*, even while he was yet in the ſtate of *Infidelity*. The Perſon introduced as repreſenting his Own Caſe in *This* Chapter, deſcribes himſelf after the following manner "*That* Sin wrought in him all manner of concupiſcence; *ver.* 8: *That* "Sin deceived him and ſlew him; *ver.* 11: *That* he was carnal, ſold under Sin; "*ſo that* what he did, he allowed not; and what he would, That he "did not, *ver.* 14: *That* the good which he would, he did not; but "the evil which he would not, That he did; *ver.* 19: *And*, *ver.* 25, "*that* with the mind he ſerved the Law of God, but with the fleſh the "Law of Sin." Now the Character St. *Paul* every where gives of himſelf even *before* his Converſion to Chriſtianity, is *very contrary* to That here deſcribed. Phil. iii. 3; *We have no confidence in the fleſh*, that is, in our ſtate of Life antecedent to the Forgiveneſs granted in the Goſpel: *Though*, for his *own* part, "I (*ſays he*) *might* alſo have confidence in the fleſh. If any other man "thinketh that he hath whereof he might truſt in the fleſh, I more. Circum-"ciſed the eighth day, of the ſtock of Iſrael, of the tribe of *Benjamin*, an "Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the Law, a Phariſee; Concerning "Zeal, perſecuting the Church; touching the Righteouſneſs which is in the "Law, blameleſs. *Again*, *Gal.* i. 13; Ye have heard of my converſation in "time paſt, in the Jews religion, how I-----profited in the Jews religion, above "many my Equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the "Traditions of my Fathers." The ſame account he gives of himſelf, in his publick Speech to the multitude of the *Jews*, *Acts* xxii. 3; "I am verily a "man----taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the Fathers, "and was zealous towards God, as ye all are this day:----As alſo the High-"Prieſt doth bear me witneſs, and all the eſtate of the Elders." And again, in his Plea before the Council, *Acts* xxiii, 1; "Men and Brethren, I have lived "in all good conſcience before God, until this day." And in his Apology for himſelf before King *Agrippa*, ch. xxvi. 4; "My manner of life from my "youth, which was at the firſt among mine own nation at Jeruſalem, know all "the Jews; which knew me from the Beginning, (if they would teſtify,) that "after the moſt ſtraiteſt Sect of our religion, I lived a Phariſee." And in his Second Epiſtle to *Timothy*, ch. ii, 3; "I thank God, whom I ſerve from my "Foreſathers with a pure conſcience." In *One* reſpect, he had indeed been faulty; and with regard to That Particular, he elſewhere ſtiles himſelf, by way of Aggravation, *a Blaſphemer, and a Perſecutor, and Injurious*, and the *Chief of Sinners*, becauſe *he perſecuted the Church of God*. But this, though it was indeed a very great Fault, as proceeding from raſh and inconſiderate Heat, and therefore wholly inexcuſable, yet it was not done by him with a Senſe and Conſciouſneſs of Sin upon his Mind at the time of committing it; but on the contrary with a full (though falſe) Perſwaſion, that he was in That very Action zealouſly doing God good Service: And therefore (as he himſelf tells us) he *obtained mercy, becauſe he did it ignorantly in Unbelief*. Now *This* is evidently a very different thing, from a man's ſinning *againſt* the clear Light of his own Conſcience; approving the Law of God, and acknowledging the *Commandment to be Holy and Juſt, and Good*; and yet at the ſame time acting contrary to it, and reproaching and condemning himſelf in the very Acts of Wickedneſs: Which is the caſe of the Perſon deſcribed in *This* Chapter. And therefore it cannot poſſibly be, that St. *Paul* ſhould be here ſpeaking concerning *Himſelf*; no, not even in his State of Unbelief, *before* his Converſion to Chriſtianity.

Others,

Others, in their explication of this Chapter, have ſuppoſed that the Apoſtle here deſcribes more generally a *regenerate* Perſon; ſuch a one as is full indeed of Infirmities and great Failings, but ſtill ſincere and truly regenerate; becauſe he is repreſented, as being convinced and ſenſible that *the Law is ſpiritual*; ver. 14. *conſenting unto the Law, that it is good*; ver. 16. complaining that Since *to will is preſent with him*, but *how to perform that which is good he finds not*, therefore *it is no more* He *that does* the evil, *but Sin that dwelleth in him*; ver. 20: and, laſtly declaring that he delights *in the Law of God, after the* inner Man; and *with the* mind, ſerves the *Law of God*; ver. 22, 25. But, notwithſtanding all theſe Characters, it is ſtill very evident, that the Perſon here deſcribed, is not at all a *regenerate* Perſon. For *whoſoever is born of God, doth not* commit *Sin*; 1 Joh. iii. 9; that is, does not habitually, or in great and plain Inſtances, contrary to the clear Light and Conviction of his Conſcience, continue to do Evil; much leſs he, what the Perſon here ſpoken of by the Apoſtle is repreſented to be, ver. 14. *ſold under ſin*: Which, in Scripture-language, is an Expreſſion of the greateſt and moſt highly and aggravated Guilt; 1 *Kings* xxi. 25; *There was none like unto Ahab, who did* ſell *himſelf to work Wickedneſs in the ſight of the Lord.* The *Infirmities*, Frailties, or Failings, of virtuous and good Men, are entirely of *Another Kind.* They are either Ignorances, Surprizes, Inadvertencies, Omiſſions, or Faults committed not deliberately, or immediately forſaken and amended. Theſe, through the Grace and Mercy of the Goſpel, are continually forgiven Men, according to the Tenour of our Saviour's Prayer; and therefore are not inconſiſtent with a regenerate State. But to ſin deliberately and habitually, in great and plain Inſtances, againſt the clear Light and Convictions of Conſcience, in the manner deſcribed throughout this Whole Chapter; *This Spot*, (as *Moſes* elegantly expreſſes it, *Deut.* xxxii. 5,) *is not the Spot of God's children*, but of a *perverſe and crooked generation*, who *have corrupted themſelves.* The *knowing* and *approving* what is right, and *conſenting to the Law that it is good*; is not what will by any means denominate a Man, a regenerate Perſon, if his *Practice* be not anſwerable to his Knowledge. *Not every one that ſaith unto Me, Lord, Lord*, (ſays our Saviour,) *ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; *but he that* doth *the Will of my Father which is in Heaven. Belief* alone, is nothing: For even *the Devils*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *believe and tremble. Profeſſion* of *Religion*, if Men are not really made *better* by it, is nothing: For if the *Salt has loſt his Savour, wherewith ſhall it be ſeaſoned? It is neither fit for the Land, nor yet for the Dunghil, but to be caſt out and trodden under foot of Men. Knowledge* and *Approbation of what is good*, without putting it in *Practice*, is nothing: For, *to him that* knoweth *to do good, and doth it not, to Him it is Sin*; Jam. iv. 17: Nay, the *greater* is the Sin, proportionably to his Knowledge; For *That Servant which knew his Lord's Will, and prepared not himſelf, neither did according to his Will, ſhall be beaten with Many Stripes*; Luke xii. 47. It is very evident therefore, that the Perſon deſcribed by St. *Paul* through this whole Chapter as it cannot poſſibly mean St. *Paul himſelf*, ſo neither *in general* is it by any means a *regenerate* Perſon.

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Senſible of the Weight of Theſe conſiderations, *Others* have therefore ſuppoſed, that the Apoſtle is here deſcribing an unregenerate *Chriſtian*; one who believes, and makes Profeſſion of, the doctrine of the Goſpel; but is perpetually overcome by the returning Temptations, and continual Deceitfulneſs of Sin. And indeed, that the perſon here ſpoken of, is one ſtill *in the gall of Bitterneſs and in the Bond of Iniquity*, or in an *unregenerate* State; is very certain. But that the Apoſtle ſpeaks of a *Chriſtian* as continuing in ſuch a State, is plainly a very great miſtake and miſinterpretation of his words. For that he did *not* and *could* not ſo mean, is apparent from the *Two* following Reaſons. The *one* is, that in this very Diſcourſe, both in the Beginning and at the Concluſion of it, he *expreſsly declares* the State and

SERM. XLV. Condition of the Perſon deſcribed through this whole Chapter, to be That *State, from which* men are delivered *by the efficacy of the Goſpel of Chriſt.* Ver. 4, in the *Introduction* of his Diſcourſe; *My brethren* (ſays he) *ye alſo are become dead to the Law, by the Body of Chriſt,* —— *who is raiſed from the dead, that we ſhould bring forth fruit unto God: For when we were in the fleſh,* (*i. e.* before the converſion to the ſpiritual Religion of Chriſt,) *the Motions of Sin which were by the Law, did work in our Members to bring forth fruit unto death: But* Now, *we are delivered from the Law,*——*that we ſhould ſerve in Newneſs of Spirit.* And in like manner at the *Concluſion* of this whole Diſcourſe, ver. 24; *Who ſhall deliver me* (ſays he,) *from the Body of this Death! I thank God, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord*; That is, I thank God, we *are* delivered from it by the Goſpel of Chriſt: For (as he immediately adds, ver. 1. of the following Chapter,) *they which are in Chriſt Jeſus, walk not after the Fleſh, but after the Spirit: For the Law of the Spirit of Life in Chriſt Jeſus, hath made me free from the Law of Sin and Death*; *i. e.* has enabled Men effectually to overcome the Temptations of Unrighteouſneſs. "For what the Law could not do, in that it was "weak through the Fleſh;" has been effected by the more powerful Motives and Aſſiſtances of the Goſpel: "That the Righteouſneſs of the Law "might be fulfilled in Us, who walk not after the Fleſh, but after the "Spirit." And in the ſame manner he elſewhere argues. 1 *Cor.* xv. 56; "The Sting of death is Sin, and the Strength of Sin is the Law; but thanks "be to God which giveth us the Victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt;" that is, who gives us the Victory over Sin and Death, through the powerful and efficacious Helps of the Goſpel of Chriſt. The *other* Reaſon, from whence (I ſaid) it is apparent that the Apoſtle in his Deſcription of an unregenerate Perſon, living under the Power of ſinful Habits, does not mean a *Chriſtian*; is becauſe the Scripture, in the whole Courſe and Tenour of it, "never ſuppoſes *a* Chriſtian *to be a* vicious *Perſon.* Rom. viii. 9; If any "man have not the Spirit of Chriſt, (*if he brings not forth the* Fruits of the "Spirit *in a virtuous and good life,*) he is none of His: *For* if Chriſt be in you, "the Body is dead, becauſe of Sin; but the Spirit is Life, becauſe of Righ-"teouſneſs. And they that are Chriſt's *Gal.* v. 24; *as many as are ſincere* "*Diſciples of Chriſt*, have crucified the Fleſh, with the Affections and Luſts. "*For* whatſoever is born of God, (*which, in St.* John's *language, is the ſame* "*as what St.* Paul *calls* having the Spirit of Chriſt;) Whatſoever is born "of God, overcometh the World," that is, effectually reſiſts the Temptations of a ſinful and debauched World. *And this is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith*; our Faith, or firm Belief of a Life to come, and of a Reſurrection to eternal Judgment. If any Man is not influenced by This Belief, to live ſoberly, righteouſly and Godly in the World; the Scripture calls him not a Chriſtian. 1 John iii. 6; *Whoſoever ſinneth, hath not ſeen him, neither known him.* Happy were it for Men who *call* themſelves *Chriſtians*, if they would ſeriouſly and frequently conſider with themſelves, *wherein* That *Chriſtianity* conſiſted, which our Saviour himſelf and his Apoſtles taught; and if they would in earneſt endeavour, to amend their Lives and Manners by that Rule.

Having thus at large ſhown, that the Perſon the Apoſtle here ſpeaks of in the Text, I *had not known Luſt*; and whom he very particularly deſcribes thro' this *whole Chapter*; can neither be St. *Paul himſelf*, no, not even *before* his converſion; nor *Any regenerate* Perſon, either *Jew* or *Chriſtian*; nor yet (as is uſually ſuppoſed) an *unregenerate Chriſtian*; it remains (which was the *Firſt* thing I propoſed to clear) that This whole Diſcourſe, of which the Text is a part, muſt neceſſarily be underſtood to be a Deſcription of an *unregenerate* or *ſinful* Perſon not *yet converted to* Chriſtianity. I ſay, this whole viith Chapter to the *Romans*, is plainly intended of a perſon in his profeſſion *not yet Chriſtian*, and in his Life *vicious.* Which though

though possibly it might equally be the Case either of a *Jew* or a *Heathen*; yet because the Apostle is here more particularly directing his discourse to those of his *own Nation* the *Jews*, for This *reason* (I suppose) it is, that, according to his usual Method of giving them as little Offence as possible, he introduces his Discourse in the first *Person*, ver. 5, *When* We (we unconverted *Jews*) *were in the Flesh, the motions of Sin——did work in* Our *Members*. And so, thro' the whole Chapter, *I had not known Sin*, and, I (speaking in the Person of an unconverted *Jew*, *I*) *am carnal, sold under Sin*, and the like. The SERM. XLV.

II. *Second* particular I proposed to consider in the Text, is, *how* we are to understand that the *Knowledge* of any Sin is *by the Law: I had not known Lust, except the* Law *had said, Thou shalt not covet*. Now, This Assertion of the Apostle, it is evident, must be understood either in a *larger*, or in a more *restrained* Sense; according as we suppose the word, [*Lusting* or] *Coveting* to be here taken either under the *general* Notion of *Sin*, or under the more limited consideration of its being a Sin of a *particular kind*. If we consider it under the Notion of *Sin* in *general*; then the Meaning of the Assertion, that *by the Law is the knowledge of Sin*, is This Only; that the Knowledge of Sin is more *plain*, more *clear* and *distinct*, and Sin consequently made more *inexcusable*, by the *Law* which expressly forbids the committing of it. *I had not known Sin, but by the Law*; that is, I had not known it in so *clear* and *convincing* a *manner*. Thus our Saviour speaking of the perverseness of the *Jews*, *Joh.* xv. 24; "If I had not (*says he*) done among them the Works which "none other man did, they had not had Sin." His meaning is, not that they would have been wholly guiltless, but that their Sin would have been comparatively much smaller than it now was. Men *have* the knowledge of Sin by the Light of *Nature*, by *natural reason and conscience*; But the *guilt* and *inexcusableness* of Sin, is greatly increased and aggravated, by the clear prohibition of an *express* law. "Rom. vii. 11, 13; Sin, taking occasion by the "Commandment,—slew me;—that it might appear Sin, working Death in me "by that which is good, that Sin by the Commandment might become ex-"ceeding sinful." And This is what the Apostle means, when he says elsewhere, that *by the Law is the Knowledge of Sin*, ch. iii. 20: That *where there is no law, there is no Transgression*, ch. iv. 15: That *the law entred, that the Offence might abound*, ch. v. 20: And that *the Strength of Sin, is the Law*; 1 *Cor.* xv. 56.

This is *universally* true concerning *all Sin in general*, that the Guilt of it is greatly increased by the Clearness of the Law that forbids the Commission of it. But now, if we take the word, [*Lust* or] *Coveting*, in the Text; if we take it in a more *restrained* and *limited* Sense, as denoting a *particular kind of Sin*; Then the Apostle's assertion, "I had not known Lust, except the Law "had said, Thou shalt not covet;" may mean more strictly, that whereas, usually and properly speaking, not the *Desire* of Evil, but the *Complying* with evil Desires and *putting them in Practice*, is Sin, according to That of St. *James*, *Lust when it hath conceived, bringeth forth Sin*; therefore Men would not naturally have been sensible of the Mischief and Danger of "Evil and "inordinate Desires, *except* the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet." And this brings me to the

III. *Third* and Last thing I proposed; Which was, to consider the *Meaning and Extent* of the *particular Law itself*, here referred to by the Apostle; *Thou shalt not covet*. Which words are cited from *Exodus* xx. 17, wherein *Moses* delivers the *tenth Commandment*. Now it is plain, *That Commandment* given there at the *conclusion* of the Moral Law, does not so much contain a prohibition of any *particular Vice*, as a general *Fence* or *Security* for the Observation of all the foregoing Precepts. Mens *Actions* will very hardly be restrained from being inordinate, if their *Desires* be not under government and due Subjection. For as *out of the abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaketh*, so the *Desires and Appetites* are the Spring from whence flow the *Actions* of

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Life. Keeping the *Paſſions* regularly under the Government of Reaſon, is *laying the Ax to the Root of the Tree*, and preventing the great Cauſes and Occaſions of Sinning. For this Reaſon, our Saviour, in his Sermon upon the Mount, in order more effectually to prevent *Murders*; forbids all *cauſeleſs Anger*. That *Adulteries* and *Fornications* might not be ſo much as *named* among *His* Diſciples, he commands them to reſtrain every inordinate *Inclination*. That they might be far from incurring any danger of *Perjury*, he forbids them to *ſwear at all* in common Converſation. That they might be ſure not to be of a *peeviſh and revengeful* Temper, he commands them to bear private Injuries *without retaliation*. That they might be far from all *Hatred and Animoſities* among *Themſelves*, he enjoins them to *love* even their *very Enemies*. In fine; that they might not *actually* tranſgreſs his Commandments, he teaches them to reſtrain every *Evil Thought* and *Deſire* of tranſgreſſing them. The *Phariſees and Scribes* among the *Jews*, *They* alſo taught Doctrines which they ſtiled *Fences* or *Hedges* of the Law: But Theſe Doctrines of theirs, were *Superſtitious Traditions*, or mere *external Ceremonies*; tending, not to make Men obſerve the Law of God more ſtrictly, but, on the Contrary, to make them lay a greater ſtreſs upon the *Injunctions of* men, than upon the *Commands of* God. The *Church of Rome* among *Chriſtians*, *They* likewiſe have invented *Fences* highly *Superſtitious*. Under pretence of greater *Holineſs* in their *Clergy*, they have taken upon them to forbid lawful *Marriage*. Under pretence of preventing *Covetouſneſs*, they have inſtituted certain Orders of Men, whom they call *Mendicants*, to live wholly upon *Begging*. Under pretence of hindring *Worldly-mindedneſs*, they have taught men to retire into *Monaſteries*, from all uſeful *Duties* and *Employments* in the World. But Theſe things evidently have *No* proper Tendency to cure the Paſſions. The true *Defences* of Virtue, are, not the laying *ſuch kinds* of Reſtraints, as naturally *increaſe* the Temptation; but ſuch as, by *preventing* Temptation, tend to cut off the Means and Occaſion of Sinning. And of *This ſort* is That Commandment in the Law, *Thou ſhalt not* Covet. The beſt Security, and moſt effectual Means of avoiding *ſinful Actions* is, *not to indulge* any inordinate *Deſire*. For, as the Wiſe man excellently expreſſes it, " Prov. vi. 27; Can a man " take Fire in his boſom, and his cloaths not be burnt? Can one go upon hot " Coals, and his feet not be burnt?

The *Sins* here ſpoken of by *Solomon*, and alluded to by St. *Paul* in this whole viith Chapter to the *Romans*, and to which the *Commandment itſelf* cited in the Text had a *primary* Regard; are thoſe mentioned by the ſame Apoſtle at the Head of his Catalogue of the *Works of the Fleſh*. But *beſides* Theſe, there are alſo ſome *Other* Particulars included in This Law, *Thou ſhalt not Covet*; As appears in the Commandment delivered more at large by *Moſes*; *Exod.* xx. 17. I ſhall briefly mention one or two Inſtances; and ſo conclude.

1*ſt*, In the *firſt* place, here is forbidden the Sin of *Covetouſneſs*. That is; Not the fooliſh Deſire of Riches for Riches ſake, and a Penuriouſneſs in the Uſe of what men already poſſeſs of *their Own*; (Tho' *That* alſo *is* a Vice:) But the thing *here* forbidden, is ſuch an inordinate *Deſire* in men, of *increaſing* their *own* Subſtance, as tempts them to uſe the *irregular* Methods of *defrauding* or *deceiving* their *Neighbours*. I ſay, the *irregular* methods, of *Fraud*, *Deceit*, *Violence*, and the like. For *otherwiſe*, the *Deſire* of any thing belonging to our *Neighbour*, which *he* may *lawfully* part with, and is *willing* to do ſo, and which *we* can obtain by *juſt and equitable* Means, is not a *Sin*, nor at all here *forbidden*. But

2*dly*, Another thing prohibited in the Command here cited by the Apoſtle, is *Enviouſneſs* or *Repining at what Others enjoy*. Which as it is a " Reproach- " ing of the Diſtributions of Providence; *and a continual* Temptation to Sin; " *ſo it is a perpetual* Torment *and* Uneaſineſs *to a man's* ſelf. Envy, *ſays* Eli- " phaz *in the book of* Job, (ch. v. 2.) ſlayeth the ſilly one; *and, as* Solomon " *elegantly expreſſes it*, Prov. xiv. 30; is the Rottenneſs of the Bones.

3*dly*

3*dly* and *laſtly*; This Law, *Thou ſhalt not Covet*, is a *forbidding* Men to be *Diſcontented with their own Condition.* Whatever *Any* of us enjoy, is the *Free Gift of God.* And as no man knows the *Deſerts* of *Others*, comparative with his *Own*; As he knows not the Deſigns and Methods of *Providence*, in the preſent unequal Diſtribution of things; As he knows not how much *better* his *preſent Circumſtances* may poſſibly be for him, than even thoſe he would moſt earneſtly *covet* to be in; So he *can* have *no* juſt reaſon to murmur, at what the Divine Wiſdom has thought fit to allot him. SERM. XLV.

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Reason the Judge of Religious Actions.

1 JOHN. iii. 20, 21.

For if our Heart condemn us, God is Greater than our Heart, and knoweth all Things. Beloved, if our Heart condemn us not, then have we Confidence towards God.

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AS, in the Case of the *Bodily* Senses, a man, without *shutting his Eyes* or *stopping his Ears*, cannot avoid *discerning the Light*, or *hearing the Sounds*, with which he is encompassed; So the *Mind* likewise, or *rational* Faculty, can no other way avoid *perceiving* the natural *Dictates* of *Reason* with regard to things *present*, or its *Judgment* concerning what is *past*, or its *Apprehensions* of what is *to come*; but by forcibly *withdrawing* its *Attention* from This its proper Object, and fixing it entirely and habitually upon matters of *Sense*. " *Did not* the Cares of This " World, and the Deceitfulness of Riches, and the Lusts of other things *continually* " entring in, choke the word; " that is, divert men perpetually from hearing the Dictates of Reason and Religion, they could not possibly but have continually before their Eyes the *difference* of good and Evil, and a perpetual Apprehension of the

Mark iv. 19.

the ſuitable *Conſequences* of their Actions, in the courſe either of a vertuous or a vicious Life. They could not poſſibly but be continually judging *Themſelves*: And the judgment a man paſſes upon *Himſelf*, either of Approbation or Condemnation, whenever he deliberately weighs his own Actions; is, in other words, the Sentence which his Reaſon ſuggeſts that *God the Judge of All* will paſs upon him. To ſtifle this judgment of reaſon, by artfully or laboriouſly withdrawing his attention from it, by drowning himſelf in Drunkenneſs and Debauchery, by plunging himſelf in a perpetual Hurry of Buſineſs, or in an uninterrupted Succeſſion of Diverſions; is to no more purpoſe, than for a man walking upon a Precipice, to comfort himſelf by ſhutting his Eyes; or for a perſon in great Dealings, to pleaſe himſelf with being ignorant of the ill ſtate of his own Accounts. Things are what they are, whether men will conſider them or no: And the Time muſt come, when every man will neceſſarily *feel* the Condition he is in, whether it be Good or Bad. The proper Buſineſs of Wiſdom, is to ſee and obſerve beforehand, *whither* the way we are going will lead us. That if the *End* is likely to be happy, we may have rational aſſurance and ſatisfaction in the *Way*: Or, if the *Event* will probably be *ruinous*, that we may prevent the Evil, by changing our Courſe, before it be too late. The moſt *momentous* Concern of Man, is the State he ſhall enter upon, after this ſhort and tranſitory Life is ended. And in proportion as Eternity is of greater importance than Time, ſo ought men to be ſollicitous upon what Grounds their Expectations, with regard to That Durable State, are built; and upon what Aſſurances their Hopes, or their Fears, ſtand. The Apoſtle, in the Text, has laid us down a Rule; by which if men would *ſeriouſly* and *attentively* try themſelves, they could not *generally* be much miſtaken concerning the State and Condition of their own Souls. *If our Heart condemn us, God is greater than our Heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our Heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.*

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In diſcourſing upon which words, I ſhall obſerve, *1ſt*, That the Apoſtle's Reaſoning here *ſuppoſes*, that there is a neceſſary and eſſential *Difference* between *Good and Evil*, and that men are naturally *conſcious* of This Difference, and of the conſequent *Deſert* of their Actions accordingly. *2dly*, That the Apoſtle's Argument proceeds upon This *further* Suppoſition, that *God* who is the Judge of All, makes generally the *Same Judgment* of mens Actions, as their *Own* Reaſon does; only much more perfect in the ſame kind, as having a Knowledge infinitely more perfect and unerring than Theirs. From whence, *3dly*, it will be neceſſary that I endeavour to ſhow, how far the Truth of this Rule is affected by that *falſe* application, which the *wrong* Judgment of an *erroneous* Conſcience is apt to make of it.

I *Firſt*; The Apoſtle's Reaſoning in the Text, *ſuppoſes* that there is a neceſſary and eſſential *Difference* between *Good and Evil*, and that men are naturally *conſcious* of this Difference, and of the conſequent *Deſert* of their Actions accordingly. There is no man that has ſo low a capacity, (of thoſe who have at all the Uſe of their Reaſon;) there is no man, I ſay, of ſo mean and low a capacity, but, when his Neighbours oppreſs him by Violence, or impoſe upon him by Fraud, has an ill opinion of the Perſons who ſo oppreſs or defraud him; thinks them blame-worthy, and juſtly puniſhable; would puniſh them Himſelf, if it was in his Power, till they make him Satisfaction; appeals to any Friend or Magiſtrate, if any ſuch be within his reach, in order to have juſtice done him; and, if he believes there is any inviſible Governour and Judge of the World, ſuperiour to all Earthly Powers, he cannot avoid making a ſilent Appeal to *Him*, in caſe all other Redreſs fails, and the Injury be Great or Laſting. There never was any perſon in *Any Age*, there never was any perſon in *Any Country* upon Earth, but thus judged concerning any Violence or Fraud put by *Another* upon *Himſelf*. The Caſe is preciſely the ſame, whenever any Fraud or Violence is uſed by *Him* towards *Another*. And therefore the Judgment paſſed by him in That Caſe upon *Other men*, is in fact a Judgment paſſed by him upon *Himſelf*. The ſame may be ſaid concerning any *Other* known Inſtance of *Wickedneſs*: Concerning every kind of Impiety, Unrighteouſneſs, or Debau-

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chery. The perſon who commits the Crime, always *condemns Himſelf*; and is conſcious that he *deſerves* to be puniſhed. Men may *divert* and *turn away* their Thoughts from the unpleaſing Subject, by variety of Amuſements, and numberleſs vain Imaginations. They may *flatter* themſelves, as they pleaſe, with Objections againſt the unalterable and eſſential Difference of Virtue and Vice; and reſolve to *ſay* within themſelves, though they can never really be perſwaded of it, that they *ſhall have Peace, though* they *walk in the imagination of* their own *Hearts, to add* one Sin *to* another; *Deut.* xxix. 19. They may confidently and preſumptuouſly *diſpute* and *argue* in *general*, that all Actions are naturally and originally alike; that Morality is but a Fiction of Speculative Men; and the Notion of Vice and Virtue, only a Creature of the Laws or Cuſtoms of Nations. But the Judgment in *particular*, that every wicked man neceſſarily and immediately makes concerning any unjuſt Action of *Another*, by which he *Himſelf* happens to ſuffer; will *for ever* convict him of *knowing well* That difference of Moral Good and Evil, which he is not willing to *acknowledge*, or which however he is not willing to make the Rule of his *own* Behaviour. "This is what the Apoſtle calls, the Law written in mens Hearts, by "which they are a Law unto themſelves, their Conſcience alſo bearing Wit"neſs, and their Thoughts the mean while accuſing or elſe excuſing one a"nother; Rom. ii. 14, 15. It is, in the words of my Text, our Heart con"demning or not condemning us.

And this is true, not with regard to the Dictates of *Natural Reaſon* only; but, in thoſe who profeſs themſelves *Chriſtians*, it is true alſo with regard to the Terms or Conditions of the *Goſpel of Chriſt*. Whatever Difficulties there may be in ſome of the Hiſtorical, or Prophetical, or Controverſial parts of the Books of Scripture; yet as to the *Practical* part, the Duties required of a Chriſtian in order to Salvation, there is no man that ever *read* the Sermons of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, or ever *heard* them read, but underſtood perfectly well what our Saviour meant by commanding us to worſhip the One True God of Nature, the Author and Lord of the Univerſe, and to do to all men as we would they ſhould do to Us; and that, denying ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, we ſhould live *ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly* in this preſent world; in expectation of being righteouſly and impartially adjudged, according to our Works, to a State of Happineſs or Miſery in the world to come; by our Saviour himſelf, our merciful and compaſſionate Judge. There never was any man in the Chriſtian World, but *felt* the reaſonableneſs and importance of this doctrine; and, whenever theſe things have been repeated to him, was immediately conſcious to himſelf, either of having followed or tranſgreſſed theſe Precepts. And whatever looſe or ſuperſtitious Notions may have confounded his Underſtanding, or influenced his Practice; yet the uniform voice of univerſal and eternal Reaſon, has always ſuggeſted to him ſo far as he has been at all a rational Creature, a ſecret ſenſe or judgment of the *Deſert* of his own Actions, as meaſured by the Rules of This *everlaſting Goſpel*; and filled him with ſecret *Hopes* or *Fears* ariſing irreſiſtibly in his Mind accordingly, in ſpite of the Weight and Power of all the poſſible Prejudices either of *Unbelief* or *Superſtition*.

Rev. xiv. 6.

II. *Secondly*; The Apoſtle's Argument in the Text, proceeds upon this *further* Suppoſition, that *God* who is the Judge of all, makes generally the *ſame Judgment* of mens actions, as their *Own* Reaſon does; only much more perfect in the ſame kind, as having a Knowledge infinitely more perfect and unerring than Theirs. *If our Heart condemn us, God is Greater than our Heart, and knoweth all things:* But *if our Heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.* The Reaſon is, becauſe This Moral *Judgment* concerning Good and Evil, is nothing elſe but a *Perceiving* the nature of Things to *be* what it *is*. And conſequently it cannot but be the *ſame* in *All* rational Beings, at *all* Times and in *all* Places. It is One and the ſame in *All* men; and the ſame in all *Other* intelligent Beings whatſoever, as in *Men*; and the ſame neceſſarily in *God Himſelf*, the Supreme Law-giver and Judge of All. The *Nature* and the *neceſſary Relations* of Things, ariſe from the immutable *Nature of God*: But the

Things

Things themſelves, the *exiſtence* of the World and of all things in it, is wholly owing to his *Will* and *good Pleaſure*. Now *God cannot* poſſibly *deny Himſelf*; 2 Tim ii. 13. So long as he pleaſes that things ſhall exiſt, he cannot but *ſee* the nature of them to *be* what it *is*: Nor can he poſſibly either *judge* or *will* any thing contrary to Truth. The Difference is This only; that whereas frail and mortal men are frequently blinded with *Prejudices* and *falſe Appearances*; God, who is perfect and infallible, always judges according to the *Reality* of things. And when *Men* deceive themſelves by erroneous judgments, it is not that the Moral nature of things is ever in itſelf dubious and indiſcernible, or that the Faculty of Reaſon ever miſleads men; but it is becauſe they, either wilfully or negligently, miſapply the Faculty, and will judge by ſome wrong Rule; making the *Laws*, or *Cuſtoms*, or *Traditions*, or *Examples* of *Men*, (things infinitely *various*, *mutable*, and *uncertain*,) to be the *Meaſure of Right*, inſtead of the *uniform and unalterable Nature of Things*. But *This* caſe will be conſidered under my *Third* Head. *Generally* ſpeaking, the ſecret and *inward* Reaſon of mens Minds is apt to judge *rightly* concerning Good and Evil; as the Eye, the *external* Organ, does concerning the Differences of Light and Colours. And what judgment this ſecret and inward Reaſon of mens *Own* Minds, paſſes upon their own Actions; the ſame they have all poſſible Reaſon to think that *God* alſo paſſes upon them. For, whatever a man's *own eyes* plainly ſee; he cannot doubt but a perſon of *better Eyes* muſt ſee the *ſame* more perfectly. And whatever a man free from paſſion and wilfulneſs, upon calm conſideration clearly and diſtinctly diſcerns within his *own Mind*; he is very ſure the *Infinite and All-knowing Mind* cannot but diſcern ſtill more clearly and diſtinctly. Hence, whenever a man's *own Heart* condemns him, that is, not when he is diſturbed with melancholy and unaccountable *Fears*, but when he is condemned by the *Judgment of his own Reaſon*; that is, when he *knows* that he is doing a wicked or unjuſt Action, contrary to the Reaſon of things and to the Will of God; he cannot but be tormented with terrible Apprehenſions (and he has juſt *reaſon* ſo to be,) of the righteous Judgment of God. On the contrary, *if our* own *Heart condemn us not*; that is not, if we be negligent, thoughtleſs or Atheiſtical; but if, upon an impartial Review of our paſt Lives, we can ſatisfy our ſelves that we have really and ſincerely been Followers of Truth and Virtue; that we have lived ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in This World; or, if in any of theſe reſpects we have formerly been faulty, that yet Now at leaſt we have effectually reformed and amended our Manners; then, as the Text expreſſes it; we may *have confidence towards God*; Or, as it is in the 19*th* Verſe, then may we *aſſure our Hearts before him*. If a man can ſay with St. *Paul*, *Acts* xxiii. 1, *I have lived in all good conſcience before God, until This day: And* (ch. xxiv. 16.) *herein do I exerciſe my ſelf Always, to have a Conſcience void of Offence, toward God and toward Men*: And again, (2 Cor. i. 12.) *Our Rejoycing is This, the Teſtimony of our Conſcience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity—we have had our Converſation in the World:* If a man can ſay This to himſelf upon careful and ſerious examination of his own paſt Behaviour, than may be applyed to him thoſe words in the Book of *Job*, ch. xxii. 26; "Then ſhalt thou have thy "delight in the Almighty, and ſhalt liſt up thy Face unto God. *And ch.* "xi. 15; Then ſhalt thou liſt up thy face without Spot; yea, thou ſhalt be "ſtedfaſt, and ſhalt not fear.—Thou ſhalt be ſecure, becauſe there is Hope; ver. 18. 19. "—Alſo thou ſhalt lie down, and none ſhall make thee afraid. *Or, as the* "*Author of the Book of* Eccleſiaſticus *expreſſes it, ch.* xiv. 2; Bleſſed is He, "whoſe Conſcience hath not condemned him, and who is not fallen from his "Hope in the Lord." Nevertheleſs, *even* in *This* caſe, there is no ground for confident *Preſumption*. For when we *have done all thoſe things that are commanded* us, *we are* ſtill but *unprofitable Servants*. And in judging whether we have really done our Duty, or no, *God is greater than our Hearts, and knoweth all things*; that is, cannot poſſibly be impoſed upon, as *we* may impoſe upon *our ſelves*, by any Negligences or Prejudices whatſoever. And therefore St.

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Paul juſtly ſays, 1 *Cor.* iv. 4, "I know nothing by my ſelf; yet am I not "hereby juſtified; but he that judgeth me, is the Lord." It remains in the

III. *Third* and Laſt place, that I endeavour briefly to ſhow, how far the Truth of the Rule I have laid down in This Diſcourſe, is affected by that *Falſe* application, which the *wrong* Judgment of an *erroneous* Conſcience is apt to make of it. It is certain, men are *naturally* Conſcious of the difference of *Good* and *Evil*, and of the conſequent *Deſert* of their own Actions. It is *natural* for them to *apprehend*, that this Judgment of their own *Conſciences*, is the Judgment that *God* alſo paſſes upon them; And the *Scripture* very clearly affirms that it *is* ſo. Whence then comes it to paſs, that many truly *virtuous* and *pious* perſons have been under the ſtrongeſt melancholy apprehenſions, that *God* would *condemn* them; and on the contrary, many *impious* and very *wicked* men, ſeem to have been fully perſwaded in their own imaginations, that they have been doing *God* ſervice, even by unrighteous Actions? I anſwer: It proceeds from hence; That, in ſome caſes, through innocent and pitiable *Weakneſs*; in other caſes, through wicked and corrupt *Prejudice*; men ſet their own *Paſſions* of *Fear* or *Preſumption* in the Judgment-Seat of *Reaſon* and *Conſcience*. It is not the Judgment of *Conſcience* that condemns or acquits them; but their own *Fears* or *Paſſions* over-ruling That Judgment. The Judgment of *Conſcience*, is the Reſult of mens *comparing* their own Lives and Actions, with the *Law* or *Rule* of *Sobriety*, *Righteouſneſs and Godlineſs*, taught by the Light of *Nature*, and explained and confirmed by the Goſpel of *Chriſt*. But *pitiable Fears*, and *ſuperſtitious Preſumptions*, judge by *no Rule*; nay, they often judge *contrary* to *all* the moſt evident and fundamental Rules both of Reaſon and Religion. *Some*, when their Fears condemn them even to the Brink of Deſpair, yet cannot accuſe themſelves of the groſs and wilful Breach of any *One* of God's Commandments *in particular*: And therefore their own *Reaſon and Conſcience* plainly *acquits* them, at the very ſame time that they are *condemned* by their *Fears*. *Others*, when their *Superſtitious Imagination* flatters them with the higheſt *Applauſe*, in the *idolatrous* or *cruel and inhumane* Practices of a Religion founded upon Cuſtom, and Authority, and blind Submiſſion, may yet really at the ſame time be *condemned* by their own *Heart and Conſcience*, which they refuſe to hearken to. For they will own, that, what they do, is contrary to *Reaſon*; and that it ought not to be done, but in order to do *God* Service. That is; They know it to be *Evil*; and, by Arguments of Superſtition, endeavour to *force* themſelves to *approve* what *cannot be approved*. And, in effect, they make *God* himſelf to be an Evil Being; by ſuppoſing him to be Arbitrary, in making *Abſurd* things to be *True*, and *Evil* to be *Good*: Which is ſubverting both the Nature of Things, and the Foundation of all Religion, and indeed the very Being of God. The Truth therefore of the Apoſtle's Doctrine in the Text, is not affected by theſe Errours. He *ſuppoſes* the judgment of Conſcience to be founded upon *comparing* our Lives with the *Rules* of Morality: And a Judgment ſo founded, will hardly differ from the Sentence of *God*.

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SERMON XLVII.

Of the Nature of Temptations.

JAM. i. 14.

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Luſt, and enticed.

THE Senſe of Guilt is ſo neceſſarily uneaſy upon the Mind of Man, that even the moſt hardened Sinners are perpetually endeavouring to ſhift off the Blame of their Wickedneſs from *themſelves*, and to throw the Fault upon whatever comes in their way. Sometimes the Reaſon of their Wickedneſs is, becauſe *God* has not made them Better than they are: And *who has reſiſted His Will?* Sometimes it is the *Devil* that tempts them: And *How* can frail man withſtand ſo potent and ſo cunning a Deceiver? Sometimes it is the *original* Corruption of their *Nature*: And *who* can alter the Condition, to which he was *born?* Sometimes it is the general *Faſhion and Cuſtom* of the *World*: And *Who* can be ſingular, in oppoſing ſo violent a Torrent? The Apoſtle in my Text, cuts off at once both

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both *These* and all *Other* Excuſes; by determining diſtinctly, that, whatever *Aggravations* or *Extenuations* of Sin, may or may not ariſe from external Circumſtances; yet *Sin itſelf*, the *Nature and Eſſence of Sin*, conſiſts entirely in the *Free Choice* of a man's own *Will*, and that his *Guilt* is always juſt ſo much in proportion, as his *Choice* deviates from the Dictates of his *Reaſon*. *Every man is Tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Luſt, and enticed.*

The word, *Luſt*, ſignifies in This place *Every Deſire* or *Inclination* after things *unlawful* in *Any* kind. The Deſire of *unlawful Pleaſures*; which is the Vice of *Senſuality*. The Deſire of *unlawful Riches*; which is the Foundation of *Unrighteouſneſs*, *Oppreſſion*, and *Fraud*. The Deſire of obtaining *Honour* by *corrupt* methods; which is the Sin of *Ambition*. The Deſire of being *Religious* without *True Virtue*, without the ſincere *Love* of *God* and of our *Neighbour*; which is the Foundation of *Idolatry*, and of *All Superſtitions*. When by any of *Theſe* Deſires, a man is *drawn away* from what he knows is *Right*; and *enticed* to do, what the Reaſon of his Mind condemns; *then*, is he led into *Sin*. The *entire Progreſs* of which, with its *Nature* and *Conſequences*, and the *Inexcuſableneſs* of it; is very diſtinctly and very fully ſet forth in That Whole Period, of which my Text is a part. "Let no man ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: "For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Luſt, and en- "ticed: Then, when Luſt hath conceived, it bringeth forth Sin; and Sin, "when it is finiſhed, bringeth forth Death. *The* Ground *and* Foundation *of* "*Temptation*; *are the* Good things *of this* Preſent Life, *the* Pleaſures and Enjoy- "ments *of the* World." The *Agreeableneſs* of theſe Objects to the *Imagination*; the *Proſpect* of *Riches*, *Honour*, and *Pleaſure*; naturally, neceſſarily, and innocently excites *Deſires* after them. The *Continuance* of theſe Deſires, to *ſuch Degrees* and in *ſuch Circumſtances*, wherein they cannot be gratified but by *unrighteous and unlawful* means: is *Temptation* to Sin. The *Submitting* of the Mind, to This Temptation; the *chooſing* to come at the *pleaſing Object* through *unrighteous Means*; the *preferring*, in theſe Circumſtances, the gratification of an *unreaſonable Paſſion* or *Appetite*, in oppoſition to the *Dictates of Reaſon* and to the *Laws of God*; is the formal Nature, or *Eſſence*, of *Sin*. And the juſt *Conſequence*, of Sin thus choſen and conſented to; is *Death*. And in all This, *God* is in no way the *Cauſe* of any man's *Guilt*, nor takes Any *Pleaſure* in his *Puniſhment*. For all the Creatures that *God* has created, are originally and in their own nature *Good*. But Any thing may be *miſapplied* to *unreaſonable* Purpoſes. And in This *miſapplication*, conſiſts the Nature of *Sin*. Now whatever is in itſelf *unreaſonable* to be done, it is fit ſhould be *puniſhed* by a *reaſonable* Governour; and it is neceſſary, for the Support of Truth and Right, that ſuch *Puniſhment* ſhould be inflicted. As certain therefore as it is, that there *Is* a *God*; ſo certain is it, that *Sin* will finally be puniſhed. But This is beyond the Bounds of my preſent Subject.

The Words of my *Text*, contain *One* plain and obvious Propoſition; that the *Nature* of *Sin*, conſiſts in a man's ſuffering himſelf to be *drawn away*, by the *Enticement* of ſome *Appetite*, *Paſſion*, or *Intereſt*; to do what he is ſenſible is *not*, in itſelf, *Fit* and *Right*; to do what his Mind feels to be contrary to the Law of God, made known to him either by Reaſon or Revelation; contrary to Piety, or Godlineſs; contrary to Sobriety, or Temperence; contrary to Truth, Juſtice, Equity, or Charity. And becauſe This *Appetite*, *Paſſion*, or *Intereſt*, or whatſoever it be that *entices* him, is the *Deſire* of his *Own* Mind; *without which*, the Allurements of External Objects would have no Power to ſeduce him; and *which Deſire* or *Appetite* it is the proper Buſineſs of Reaſon to *govern*, to *direct* always to its proper *Object*, and to reſtrain continually within its due *Bounds*; Hence it is, that *Sin* becomes altogether *Inexcuſable*. *Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Luſt, and enticed.*

In the following Diſcourſe, I ſhall *1ſt* prove and explain the *Doctrine*, from the conſideration of the intrinſick *Nature and Reaſon* of things: And *2dly* I ſhall illuſtrate

illuſtrate it, by comparing it with ſome remarkable *Examples* of *Sinful Men* and *Sinful Actions*, recorded in *Scripture* for our Admonition.

I. *Firſt*; In the Nature of things, every *Sin* is a *Deviation* from ſome *Rule*; and *ſuch* a Deviation, as the perſon is *ſenſible of* at the time he acts, and *knows* that he ought not to have ſo acted. *This* it is, that makes the Action *blame-worthy* in its own Nature, and juſtly *Puniſhable* by a Wiſe and Good Governour. The *Senſe* of this Blame-worthineſs, is the *Conſciouſneſs* or *Shame* of *Guilt*: Which makes the perſon neceſſarily to *condemn himſelf*, and conſequently to be purſued continually with a juſt *Fear* or *Apprehenſion* of *Puniſhment*. Every Being therefore, which is either *ſo Perfect*, as that it cannot poſſibly have any *Temptation* to depart from the Rule of Right; or, on the contrary, *ſo imperfect*, as not to *know and underſtand* What *Right* is; muſt be eſſentially *incapable of Sin*. *God*, by reaſon of the *abſolute Perfection* of his Nature, is wholly *incapable* of being at all *Tempted with Evil*. And All *Creatures inferiour* to Men; for a *contrary* Reaſon, *they alſo* are *incapable* of being *Tempted with Evil*, becauſe they know not *What* Moral Good and Evil *is*. But *Man*, being endued with *rational* Faculties, and knowing well the *Difference* between *Good and Evil*, and having continually the *Reaſons and Motives* of Action, and the *Obligations* of *Conſcience* and the *Conſequences* of his Behaviour, offering themſelves to his View; is ſtill placed in Such a Situation, as to be frequently *Tempted* to depart from Reaſon, and to act contrary to what he knows is Right. For the *Good things* of this life, being naturally, neceſſarily, and in Themſelves innocently, *Deſirable*; are yet, by a numberleſs variation of Circumſtances in the State of Things in This World, very often ſo conſtituted, as that they cannot be obtained but by *Unlawful Practices*. Likewiſe, the *Evil things* or *Calamities* of life, which we naturally and neceſſarily diſlike, and deſire to flee from; yet in many caſes cannot poſſibly be avoided, but by very *wicked* and *unrighteous Compliances*. And hence ariſes the *Struggle* in a man's own Mind, between what the Scripture calls the *Fleſh*, and the *Spirit*; between the *Deſires* and *Inclinations* of *Senſe*, *Appetite*, or *Paſſion*, on the one hand; and the Dictates of *Reaſon* and true *Religion* on the other hand. When, in This Conteſt, *Reaſon* prevails as the *governing* Principle; and *Paſſions* and *Appetites* are kept under due *regulation*, and gratified only within the Bounds of Virtue and Integrity; then is the man truly a *religious* perſon. And if, beſides *deſpiſing* all *unlawful Pleaſures* and *Profits*, he moreover ſuffers at any time *actual Damage* and *Oppreſſion*, upon account of his adhering to what is juſt and right; he is then in a *particular* manner a *Witneſs* bearing Teſtimony to the Truth, and doing *Honour* to the Cauſe of Virtue and Religion. On the contrary; if men, through *Fear* of any Temporal Inconveniences ſacrifice the Intereſts of Truth and Virtue; and are leſs awed by the Conſcience of Right, and by the Apprehenſions of the Judgment of God, than by the Threatnings of a vicious and corrupt World; they may then juſtly be deemed in the number of Thoſe, who are *Fearful* in *That* ſenſe, wherein St. *John* joins together the *Fearful* and *Unbelieving*—and *Idolaters* and *Liars*, as involved in one common Condemnation: *Rev.* xxi. 8. And if, which is ſtill much *more inexcuſable* than being *terrified* out of their Duty, they ſuffer themſelves to be *withdrawn* from it by the *Allurements* of *Ambition*, *Pleaſure*, or *Profit*; and be prevailed upon by theſe Temptations, to do things contrary to *Reaſon*, *Juſtice* and *Truth*; This is what the Apoſtle in the *Text* particularly repreſents, by a man's being *drawn away of his own Luſt, and enticed*; drawn away and enticed by ſome unreaſonable Inclination or Appetite in his *own* Mind: Which ungoverned Deſire or Appetite, *when it hath conceived*, it *bringeth forth Sin*; *and Sin, when it is finiſhed, bringeth forth Death*. The *State* and *Condition* of a perſon thus ſeduced into a ſinful Courſe, is by St. *Paul* emphatically ſet forth, "Rom. vii. 15; That which I do, "I allow not: For, what I would, That do I not; but what I hate, That do I.—"For, the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, That I do." There is *one* caſe indeed, wherein poſſibly This Conteſt between *Reaſon* and *Appetite*, is ſcarce at all perceived: And That is, when men by long *Habits of Vice* are become ſtupid and inſenſible with regard to the Obligations of Mo-

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rality, or, through some great *Superstition*, have brought themselves to think perhaps some of the *worst of Vices* to be even a part of *Religion itself*; having their very *Consciences* (as St. *Paul* expresses it) *seared* as it were *with a hot iron*. In which case, men cannot indeed so properly be said to be *enticed* and *tempted* and *drawn away* into Sin; but rather (as the Scripture elsewhere expresses it) to be *Dead in Trespasses and Sins*; Sin having *already*, in the *Moral* Sense, *brought forth Death*, and in part *anticipated* the Righteous Judgment of God.

Having thus shown from the intrinsick Nature and Reason of things, (which was the *First* Point I proposed to speak to,) that the Essence or Formal Nature of Sin, consists in a man's suffering himself to be *drawn away*, by the *Enticement* of some *Appetite*, *Passion*, or *Interest*, to do what he is sensible is *not*, in itself *Fit* and *Right*; And that *herein* lies the great *inexcusableness* of Sin: It remains that I proceed now, in the

II *Second* place, to illustrate and confirm this Doctrine, by comparing it with some remarkable *Examples* of Sinful *Men* and Sinful *Actions*, recorded in *Scripture* for our Admonition. Men at *all* Times, and in *all* Places, when they have been seduced by Sin, and begun to apprehend the ill Consequences of it; have endeavoured to shift off the *Blame* from *Themselves*, and to lay at least *Part of the Fault* upon whatever else they could. But the Scripture, in Every History there recorded, has always taken care to direct us with sufficient Clearness to the true Source of the Evil.

Our First Parent *Eve*, when she had eaten of the forbidden Fruit, immediately her Excuse was; *The Serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.* And when her Husband had done the same. His Apology was; "The woman whom thou "gavest to be with me, she gave me of the Tree, and I did eat." Yet 'tis plain, Neither of these Deceits would have had any Effect, had not *the Tree* appeared *good for food, and pleasant to the Eyes, and a Tree to be desired to make one wise.* In *This* therefore consisted their *Sin*: that the Desire of pleasing their *Appetite*, and gratifying their *Curiosity*, was of greater Weight with them than the Command of God. And in *This* they were too truly the *Representatives* of Mankind: Representatives, not in the way of One person's incurring *Guilt* for Another; which is contrary to the Nature of things: But Representatives, as a just *Emblem* of the Behaviour of Mankind in general. For *every* unlawful Appetite, *every* Appetite tending towards an unlawful Object, is the Desire of the *forbidden Fruit*; And the complying with That Desire, in opposition to the Will of God made known either by Reason or Revelation, is the Essence of Sin.

Balaam flattered himself, that he *could not* go with the Messengers of the King of *Moab*, without the Divine Permission; and when he *did* go with them, that still he *could not* curse *Israel*, without leave from God: and if he *did* curse them, that yet this *could not* hurt them, unless God approved the Curse; and when he brought a real Curse upon them, by adviling the *Moabites* to tempt them to Fornication, that still This was only the Consequence of *their own* Fault. But the *True Reason* of all his Proceedings was the Hope of a *Reward* from the King of *Moab*, and the Ambition of being *advanced* by *Balak* to *Honour*.

Saul comforted himself under his Disobedience to an express Command of God, with an imaginary intention of *sacrificing* the Choice of his forbidden Spoils *unto the Lord his God.* But the *true* Motive, that *drew him away* from his Duty, was a *Covetous Desire* of the Spoil. And his Heart was so sensible of its own Falseness, that, in the very same Breath, he insinuates that the *People* were *Faulty* for preserving Those Spoils; which he acknowledges they had by his *Own* direction preserved for Sacrifice; 1 *Sam.* xv. 21, 24.

David, in the committing of That Great Crime, the Murder of *Uriah*; flattered himself with that *shameful* Apology, because *Uriah* fell by the hand of the *Ammonites*, 2 *Sam.* xi. 15; *The Sword devoureth one as well as another.* As if his being killed by the Enemy, among whom he had ordered him

him to be deſerted; was not the very ſame thing, as to have ſlain him immedi- SERM.
ately with his own Hand. XLVII.

Ahab was willing to perſwade himſelf, that he had a *Right* to *Ramoth-Gilead*; and that *God* too, by his Prophets, encouraged the undertaking. Yet, had not his Ambition and his Paſſions *drawn* him *away*, and blinded his Attention; 'twas eaſy for him to have perceived, that, in this whole matter, he was acting contrary to the Will of God. For he had expreſs Warning given him, how his Prophets were deceived: And he had no other objection againſt giving credit to *Micaiah*, but only that the Truth was what he *liked not* to hear, and that he *hated* the perſon for refuſing to flatter him in his Propheſying: *I hate him; FOR he doth not propheſy good concerning me, but evil*; 1 Kings xxii. 8.

The Caſe is the very ſame with *All* wicked men, in ſome proportion; in *All* Ages, and in *All* Kinds of unrighteous Practices. Whatever *Pretences* they make, and whatever falſe *Appearances* they blind poſſibly even *Themſelves* withal; it is always in reality ſome unreaſonable *Appetite*, *Paſſion*, or *Intereſt*, by which they are either violently hurried, or elſe perhaps inſenſibly *drawn away and enticed*. I ſhall mention one ſtanding and continual Inſtance. The fierceſt and moſt violent Perſecutors in the Church of *Rome*, conſtantly *profeſs*, and it is probable Many of them really *believe*, that they are *doing God* good *Service*, when they are deſtroying his Servants with the moſt inhumane Cruelties. Yet that the *real*, however perhaps ſometimes almoſt imperceptible, Spring and Motive of theſe their Proceedings, is *Ambition*, or the Love of Power and Dominion; of This, I ſay, there is always one evident and infallible *Demonſtration*: Which is, that they are in No degree ſo zealous and diligent in reforming Mens manners, nor ſo cruel in puniſhing the moſt enormous Immoralities, as they are in forcing men over into their *Sect* or *Party*. And This plainly ſhows, that ſuch kind of corrupt *Religion*, as well as Vices of other Denominations, are really and properly what the Apoſtle calls *Works of the Fleſh*; being founded in, and ſupported by, corrupt Paſſions, partial Affections, and evident iniquities of Inclination; "The God of this World having blinded "ed *men's* eyes, leſt the Light *of the Truth* of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt, "ſhould ſhine unto them.

Having thus at large ſhown both from the *Reaſon* of *Things*, and from the *Practice* of *Men*; that the *Nature* or *Eſſence* of *Sin*, conſiſts in a man's ſuffering himſelf to be *drawn away*, by the *Enticement* of ſome *Appetite*, *Paſſion* or *Intereſt*, to do what he is ſenſible is *not* in itſelf *Fit and Right*, nor agreeable to the *Will* and *Laws* of God: The *Inferences* I ſhall now proceed to draw from this doctrine, are briefly as follows.

1*ſt*; If *every man is* then only *tempted* to Sin, *when he is drawn away of his own Luſt, and enticed*; The *firſt* evident *Inference* from hence, is *That* made by the Apoſtle himſelf in the words preceding my Text; *Let no man ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.* In the Reaſon of Things, and in the Nature of a Moral Government over the World, there *muſt* be proper *Tryals* of Obedience and Diſobedience; which the Goodneſs of God does not oblige him to remove, becauſe, without ſuch Tryals, God's Government of the World could not be at all a Moral Government over rational Creatures. But God never tempts any man, with deſign to draw him into Sin; Nor will he *ſuffer* men *to be tempted above what they are able, but will with the Temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that they may be able to bear it*: 1 Cor. x. 13.

2*dly*; No man can with juſt reaſon lay the Blame of his Vices, upon that *Nature* wherein God has created him, or upon thoſe *Frailties* he may be ſuppoſed to have derived from his *Firſt Parents*. For, Men are not accountable for the *Appetites* of *Nature*, nor for its *Infirmities* any further, than they ſuffer their *own Wills* to be *drawn away* irregularly, contrary to the *Reaſon of Things*, and to the *Laws of God*.

3*dly*; No man can juſtly excuſe his own Wickedneſs, by alledging that he was tempted of *the Devil*. For *the Devil* has no Power to tempt men any otherwiſe, than as Wicked *Men* tempt one another, by ſuggeſting to them the

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Allurements of Pleaſure and Profit. *Judas* was covetous and *a Thief*, Joh. xii. 6, before *Satan entered into him*, ch. xiii. 27, and prevailed with him to betray his Lord for Money. *Ananias*'s Crime likewiſe, *Acts* v. 3; was not *extenuated*, but *aggravated* by his ſuffering *Satan to fill his Heart* with *Deceitfulneſs and Fraud*. The *Prince of the Power of Darkneſs*, Eph. ii. 2; is *a Spirit that worketh*, Only *in the children of diſobedience*: And the *ſtrong Deluſion God* permits him to ſend upon the world, is nothing but the *deceivableneſs of Unrighteouſneſs*, in them who *love not the Truth*, but *have Pleaſure in Unrighteouſneſs*; 2 Theſſ. ii. 10, 11, 12. They who *reſiſt the Devil*, and who *give not Place to him*, by yielding to *Sin*; he *will flee from them*; Jam. iv. 7: Eph. iv. 26, 27: 1 Pet. v. 9. And whoſoever *keepeth himſelf*, that is, guards himſelf againſt *Sin*, we *know* that *That wicked One toucheth him not*; 1 *Joh.* v. 18. The *Prince of this world*, when he *came* to our Lord, he found *nothing in him*; Joh. xiv. 30. And of *every ſincere* Mind, it may in proportion be ſaid in a lower degree, that he finds in it *nothing* to lay hold upon. This was the *Security* of *Abraham*. His *own Heart*, was *perfect* with *God*. And had God in That caſe permitted *Satan* to *deceive* him, where there was *no* corrupt diſpoſition in his *own* heart; the Deceit had been *inevitable*; and *Satan*, in That circumſtance had not been *Satan*, but an *Inſtrument only* in the hand of Providence. And the *Security of every good man*, is in proportion the ſame. God will not ſuffer him to be tempted *above what he is able*, nor to be *deceived* where he is not *drawn away of his own Luſt and enticed*.

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SERMON XLVIII.

Of the Nature of Lying.

EPHES. iv. 25.

Wherefore putting away Lying, ſpeak every one truth with his Neighbour.

THE Duty injoined in theſe words, *ſpeak every one truth with his neighbour*, has ever been acknowledged by Men of all conditions, to be our neceſſary and indiſpenſable Duty. Heathens as well as Chriſtians, Men of all Ranks and Profeſſions, of all Sects and Religions whatever, have agreed in this; that there is an eternal Obligation founded in the Nature of Things, [which every Man that attends to the Dictates of his Reaſon and Conſcience, cannot but own and be ſenſible of,] that our words ſhould be agreeable to our Thoughts; and have been ſenſible that *Lying*, or endeavouring to deceive each other, is a baſe and mean Practice, unworthy the Dignity of a rational Nature, and

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highly displeasing to God, who has given us the Use of that noble Faculty of Speech to this very End, that it might be the Interpreter of our Thoughts to each other. This is what every Man understands, and readily assents to; but then *what* may properly be called a *Lie*, and *how far* this Obligation of speaking Truth extends, hath been much disputed among learned Men. Many have been of Opinion, that it doth not bind us in all circumstances; and it is certain there are many Instances alledged, [as the learned *Grotius* observes,] wherein not only the best *Heathen* Moralists, but many ancient Christian Writers also, have thought Men not under any Obligation to speak the Truth. That the abusing the Power of Speech to the Damage and subverting of all civil Society, (when on the Contrary it was given us on purpose to be the *Bond* of Society;) that *This* is a great and crying Sin; is readily acknowledged by all: But whether the making use of Speech to deceive another in cases wherein it may seem that some *publick Good* is promoted thereby; whether *This* be such an abuse of Speech as will come under the Notion of a sinful *Lie*, is not so obvious to determine.

In discoursing therefore upon this Subject, I shall first endeavour to state clearly the Nature of a *Lie*, and what may properly be so called; and Then proceed to consider the Cases of difficulty arising thereupon.

GOD has created Man a *reasonable* and a *sociable* Creature: *reasonable*, as he is indued with that excellent Faculty of Thinking; and *sociable*, as he has a Power of communicating those Thoughts. By the Powers of *thinking and reasoning*, every individual Man in particular, is exalted above the Rank of brute Creatures; is enabled to contemplate his own Nature, and that of his fellow-creatures; and, through them, the Perfections of his Almighty Creator: But then by the Power of *communicating their thoughts*, Societies of Men have this peculiar Advantage, that they can further improve and be assistant to each other; they can acquaint one another with their Wants and Necessities; they can comfort, instruct, exhort, reprove; in a word, they can so communicate their Counsels, that as every particular Person is concerned for the whole Body, so the Whole is concerned for the Welfare of each particular. The natural Way of communicating these Thoughts, is by the Use of *Speech*: and as every particular Man, without the Faculty of Thinking and Reasoning, would be nothing Superiour to a beast; so Societies of Men without the Use of Some Way of communicating their Thoughts, could make no Advantage nor Improvement of *each other's* Reason and Understanding. Now to make use of That means to the *deceiving* each other, which God gave us on purpose for mutual *Instruction*, is a manifest Perversion of so excellent a Gift.

The proper Notion of a *Lie* therefore, is an Endeavouring to *deceive* another, by signifying that to him as true, which we ourselves think not to be so; in the ordinary Way of communicating our thoughts.

1st, I say, It is signifying that to another as true, which we ourselves think not to be so. For if a Man *thinks* a Thing to be true, and relates it to others as such; though in the Event it should prove really not to be true, yet this is not a Lie, but only an Errour. For here it is plain the Person himself is deceived, and hath no intention to Impose upon another. Whatever therefore is amiss here, is accidental and involuntary; and all the Fault he is guilty of in it, is rashness and hastiness of Speech, in too positively declaring That to be true, which he has not taken sufficient Care, to be duly informed of. On the Contrary, if a Man thinks a thing not to be true, and yet declares it to another as certain; though in the Event the Thing should chance to prove true, yet since he knew it not, and believed it not to be so, his act is still the same, and may properly be called a Lie.

2dly, I say, This must be done in the ordinary and natural Way of communicating of our Thoughts; That is, either by Speech; or else by such signs as

as ſhall be agreed to be equivalents in the place of Words. For though Men do often conjecture at each other's Thoughts and Deſigns, from other various Actions; yet if a Man ſo orders his Actions, as thereby to conceal from another his Deſigns, which That Other has no Right nor juſt ground to expect to be acquainted with; and therein deceives him; (which in many Caſes is unqueſtionably lawful;) this cannot properly be accounted a Lie.

Laſtly, To compleat the Notion of a Lie, and which is the principal Thing of all; the ſignifying That to another as true, which I know or think not to be ſo, muſt be done with a direct deſign to *deceive* him. For, *agreed* Forms of ſpeaking, have no deceit. From hence it follows that all uſual Forms or Schemes of Rhetorick, all *figurative* Expreſſions, though they ſeem to ſignify That as true, which is not literally ſo, yet can by no means be accounted Lies: And the ſame may likewiſe be ſaid, of Fables, and Parables, and mythological Deſcriptions. For theſe were never intended to deceive Men, or to give them falſe and wrong Notions of Things; but on the Contrary to convey ſome certain Truths more eaſily into their Minds, and make a firmer Impreſſion upon them. Mankind is therefore well agreed about theſe Things; that they are not to be underſtood literally; that there is a further Senſe in them which may be eaſily diſcovered, and will preſerve us from all miſtakes about them. We frequently in Holy Scripture itſelf, find the divine Nature repreſented to us under corporeal ſimilitudes; we find Eyes and Hands, and other parts of humane Bodies aſcribed to God; which Expreſſions, all Men well underſtand to be only in way of condeſcenſion to us, a help to the Imperfection of our Underſtandings; to expreſs his infinite Perfections, his knowledge and his power, in ſuch a Way, as we think and conceive of theſe Things in ourſelves.

In all ſuch Ways of ſpeaking as theſe, we always have Reaſon to preſume that thoſe we ſpeak to, will underſtand our words in the ſame Senſe as *we* do. Although it may ſometimes for very good Reaſons be allowable, when we uſe ſuch Words as are fairly capable of different Meanings, to take them in any one of thoſe Senſes, notwithſtanding it be probable that the Perſons ſpoken to will take them in another; (though I ſay this may ſometimes be allowable, becauſe as no Man is obliged always to diſcover his whole Mind, ſo doubtful Ways of expreſſing himſelf are often one of the beſt Means of concealing it; and our Saviour himſelf is obſerved to have ſometimes uſed this manner of ſpeaking;) yet great Prudence and Caution is to be uſed in this matter; and above all Things we ought to take heed, that we fall not by degrees into thoſe deceitful and pernicious equivocations, which have been allowed and encouraged by the great Corrupters of Religion in the Church of *Rome*, and which tend manifeſtly to the Subverſion of all humane Society.

Further, from hence it follows that ſuch untruths as are told by vain Perſons in a jeſting manner, and in which there is no deceit; cannot in the *ſtrict* and moſt *proper* Senſe of the Word, be called Lies. For though all ſuch Diſcourſe may juſtly ſeem unbecoming the Gravity of a Chriſtian, and may perhaps be properly enough ranked under that fooliſh jeſting, which St. *Paul* ſtiles *not convenient*, or, as the word may be rendred, *unbecoming*; *Eph.* v. 4: Yet we cannot affirm that it is always ſtrictly and abſolutely unlawful. We often ſpeak in an Ironical manner, or there are in our Diſcourſe ſuch evident Signs and Marks, as plainly enough ſhow, that we mean not in earneſt, and that we have no deſign to deceive or impoſe upon the Perſon we converſe with. For *otherwiſe*, if a Man *really* intends to *delude* another with a Thing that is falſe, though but in way of humour and abuſe only; this is by no means excuſable upon *any ground*; For to endeavour to deceive a man by abuſing his credulity, in order to expoſe him for it afterward, this is really an injurious Lie, and can no way be excuſed by being told in jeſt: *As a madman who caſteth firebrands, arrows and death, ſo is the man that deceiveth his neighbour and ſaith am I not in ſport?* Prov. xxvi. 18, 19.

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To ſum up therefore what has been ſaid on this point. A Lie ſtrictly and properly ſo called, is ſuch a manner of ſpeaking, wherein, according to the ordinary ſignification of words, a Man ſignifies that to another as true, which he himſelf either certainly knows or believes to be falſe, and That, with a deſign of impoſing upon him.

And now, as to the ſeveral *ſorts* or *kinds* of theſe Lies, I hope it may here be premiſed in the *firſt* place, that *Much* needs not to be ſaid concerning *That* ſort of *Lying*, which yet is of all others the moſt generally practiſed; namely, thoſe mean ways of deceiving and over-reaching one another, which are ſo frequently uſed in traffick and bargaining. Theſe, it is ſo evidently impoſſible to have any thing ſo much as pretended to be alledged in juſtification or excuſe of them; they are ſo plainly and confeſſedly odious both to God and Men, (*lying lips are an abomination to the Lord*, Prov. xii. 22; *and a righteous Man hateth lying*, Prov. xiii. 5;) theſe I ſay are ſo manifeſtly hateful both in the ſight of God and all good Men; they tend ſo apparently to the ſubverſion of all juſtice and honeſty, and conſequently to the deſtruction of all civil ſociety; that even ſome *barbarous* nations have made them ſeverely puniſhable. The conſciences of Men do ſo naturally ſtart at the baſeneſs and meanneſs of This practice, that nothing needs be ſaid to convince their *judgments*, of the ſinfulneſs and unlawfulneſs of it. They need only to have their *paſſions* moved, and their conſciences awakened, by being put in mind, that *the getting of treaſures by a lying tongue, is a vanity toſſed to and fro of them that ſeek death*; Prov. xxi. 6. For if Men will but give themſelves time to think; they cannot but ſee, that if there be any ſuch thing as right and wrong, if there be any ſuch thing as juſtice and injuſtice, if there be any obligation to maintain faith and truth amongſt Men, to preſerve ſociety, order and good Government in the World; this kind of Lying cannot but be in the higheſt degree unnatural and unlawful. Wherefore not enlarging further upon this; I ſhall proceed now to the conſideration of ſuch caſes, wherein many even learned Men have pleaded with very plauſible reaſons, in juſtification and defence of the uſe of divers manners of falſifying. And

1ſt, In the caſe of thoſe, to whom we have openly and juſtly declared ourſelves *enemies*, as in the caſe of a lawful and neceſſary War. And theſe, they *think*, may not only be lawfully deceived by feints and ſtratagems, (for theſe are granted on all hands to be unqueſtionably lawful,) but they further *contend*, that it is allowable to make uſe of Contracts and Agreements, to the bringing about the ſame deſign; to effect this deceit by the uſe of falſehood and treachery, by breaking promiſe, and the like. The reaſon and equity of which manner of proceeding, they *imagine* to be this; that thoſe who have openly profeſſed themſelves enemies, have (as they *conceive*) forfeited all the right they had to truth, as they have to many other parts of juſtice, charity, and other virtues, which we are bound to exerciſe to others; and that therefore, as we may uſe all means we can to annoy and endammage them, and may diſpoil them of their goods and even of life itſelf, ſo they *fancy* we may alſo deprive them of the benefits of words and contracts, without any injury or injuſtice.

2dly, In the education of *Children*; that is, of ſuch as are already arrived to ſome, though not a perfect, uſe of their reaſon; To theſe, the perſons I am ſpeaking of, *conceive*, we are not obliged to ſpeak the truth; not becauſe they have no right to truth, or have loſt that right by any forfeiture, but becauſe they are not capable of receiving and judging of it; ſo that becauſe they are not come to a full uſe of their reaſon and judgment; *i. e.* are not in a ſtate capable of judging truly of our thoughts by our words, therefore though our words be not agreeable to our thoughts, yet we cannot, they *ſuppoſe*, be ſaid to do them any wrong.

3dly, The laſt caſe, wherein falſehood has been by many thought juſtifiable, is when ſome *publick benefit* is thereby promoted; in which caſe they *fancy* they may *preſume upon* mens conſent, that they are *willing* to be deceived; that they would give up their right by which they might exact truth of us, did they know the

the reaſons that moved us to deceive them. To this caſe may be referred thoſe *pious* frauds, when, without any apparent injury to any Man, as they *think*, Men contrive certain forgeries for the promotion of *Religion*, as they *imagin*, and for the ſervice of God.

Theſe are the chief caſes *in which*, and the reaſons *why*, ſeveral of the Heathen Philoſophers, and even ſome Chriſtian Writers alſo, have thought falſehood allowable or at leaſt excuſable. Whether they had any juſt and ſufficient *reaſon* ſo to do, will beſt appear by inquiring firſt into the nature of truth, and the foundation of our obligation to ſpeak always what we think agreeable to it; and their applying it to the particular caſes. Now They who think a Lie, properly ſo called, to be in ſeveral caſes lawful; conſider Truth merely as a civil compact, to which mankind tacitly conſents; an agreement (as it were) amongſt Men, for their more convenient living together, to repreſent things to one another faithfully and as they really are. They look upon Truth as matter of private concern, as if one Man laid upon another all the obligation he has to it, and conſequently could releaſe him from that obligation either by his fault, or his incapacity, or his conſent. Thus Truth becomes merely one and the ſame thing with juſtice; and falſehood ceaſes to be a fault, unleſs when it is joyned with manifeſt injury and wrong: From hence it follows, that, ſince when a Man has forfeited or voluntarily receded from his right to any thing, it may without injuſtice be with-held from him; in ſuch caſes as thoſe, according to This Notion, a Lie will ſeem to be no longer blame-worthy.

But how, that we are on the contrary really under an obligation to Truth, diſtinct from and independent on that of mere juſtice, may appear from the following conſiderations.

Firſt, That every man's Conſcience naturally convinces him, that he is under an obligation to Truth, diſtinct from all other conſiderations; ſo that it will not without reluctance ſuffer him to deceive his Neighbour with a Lie, even though he does not foreſee any real injury or damage that will thereupon accrue to him. In the natural judgment of our Minds, we cannot forbear thinking, that there is ſomething in Truth that is great, and noble, and honourable; and ſomething in Falſehood that is mean and baſe, unworthy of a Man, and which renders him contemptible and vile, even abſtracted from what benefit or miſchief we may fancy will enſue. It is a Fault which always hides its head, as being aſhamed of itſelf, and may even be remitted to its own convictions. Hence *Lying* has always been eſteemed the vice of ſlaves and vaſſals, of the meaneſt and moſt contemptible ſort of perſons: But men of any honour and reputation, have always neceſſarily an abhorrence and deteſtation of it; ſo that though they ſhould even be perſwaded of the *lawfulneſs* of it in any particular caſes, yet would they ſtill avoid it in thoſe very caſes as much as they could, and never practiſe it without reluctance and regret. Now all This is very unaccountable, if Truth were nothing more but only a part of juſtice; For why then ſhould it not be thought as honourable to ſpread a Lie at any time for the *publick* Advantage, (which is a Vice that *Parties* and *Factions* of Men are very apt to be guilty of;) as to ſpeak the Truth for the ſame end? And if all the moral evil of Falſhood conſiſted only in the injuſtice of it, why ſhould it be thought diſhonourable or baſe to make uſe of it in caſes where that reaſon ceaſes, when it is certain all the *real* diſhonour of any action *can* ariſe only from the badneſs or moral evil of it? Wherefore ſince even in ſuch caſes, where we may *fancy* that no injury is done by it, yet nature nevertheleſs ſtarts and recoils at Falſehood as at a thing unworthy of us; ſince we feel always a ſecret judgment within our minds, that moves and prompts us to truth, and forcibly perſwades us of its obligation; ſince we feel an inward ſatisfaction when we ſtrictly practiſe it, and on the other hand are aſhamed when we have acted contrary to it; This ſhows us the native and genuine excellency of Truth, conſidered ſimply in itſelf; and that the inward ſenſe of our conſcience is againſt all Falſehood and Lies; in a word, this

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shews us that there is something sacred and divine in truth which will never suffer us to be discharged from its Obligation. It must be confessed indeed, it may sometimes happen, that a man's speaking Truth will be a hindrance to another, when falsifying would turn to his Advantage; but then this arises from the unhappy circumstances of that State, into which Men have brought themselves by Sin. Were Men in a State of Innocence and Perfection, our Duty would be inseparably united with our Interest; and there could be no Case wherein a man's performing his Duty, could be any disadvantage either to himself or his neighbour. If therefore men's Sins make no alteration in their obligations to moral Duties, and in an innocent World Truth would be confessedly our unalterable and universal Duty; it is hard to say why it should not be so now, though through the *Sin* and corruption of Men it may so fall out, that Falsehood would promote my neighbour's Interest, and that Truth must necessarily turn to his disadvantage.

2*dly*, That our Obligation to Truth, is distinct from that of merely not injuring our Neighbour, appears further from this Consideration; that in our Notion of the Supreme and most perfect Being, Veracity, and Justice are two distinct Perfections or Attributes. For as Religion in general is an Imitation of the Life of God, so particular moral Virtues are imitations and transcripts of the divine Perfections. Now if the Veracity and Justice of God be not allowed to be distinct perfections, it will not be easy to show how God can be said to be absolutely (ἀψευδὴς) a God that *cannot lie*, as the Apostle stiles him; for then it must be granted that *he* might also represent things to us otherwise than they are, as well as *men* may one to another; and might make false Revelations to his Creatures in all those Instances, wherein *men* may use Deceit one to another, *i. e.* where there appears no injustice or injury in so doing; where it should happen to be our Advantage, or at least no Disadvantage to be thus dealt with. For what can make any difference in this case? Justice is unquestionably the same in God as in Men; and if Truth be nothing else but justice; whatever Falsehood is not injurious, might as well be used by God as by Men.

But now this has always seemed too harsh, for our Reason to apprehend: And therefore we find that *Plato*, though he was *weakly* of opinion that earthly Princes might sometimes make use of Falsehood for the Benefit and good of the Common-wealth, as he fancied; yet he would not affirm the same of *God*, the supreme Governour of all Things; because he thought it would argue some kind of infirmity and imperfection in *him*, to stand in need of having recourse to such means as these. From whence it manifestly appears, that Men are naturally convinced in their consciences, that Veracity is a Virtue distinct from Justice; and that there is a moral obligation to Truth, immutable, and founded in the Nature of Things, distinct from that of not injuring our Neighbour. Now this being so; the Cases of difficulty beforementioned, will easily be accounted for. For

First, If one man's not performing his Duty, cannot excuse another from performing his; then are we as certainly bound not to break our word with an Enemy, as we are obliged to perform several other Acts of Faithfulness and Charity to him. To which purpose it is observable, that when the *Roman* Empire was in its greatest Splendour and most flourishing estate; *i. e.* when they were most eminent above other Nations for their Virtue and Honour; they would sooner die, (of which there are several Instances given us by *Tully* and others,) than break their Faith or word with an Enemy.

Again, If another's incapacity in some Degree, to judge of my performing rightly my Duty to him, cannot excuse me from my Obligation to that Duty; then are we certainly obliged to have regard to Truth, in what is said even to *Children:* And it would perhaps be of more considerable consequence in the Education of Children, than is generally imagined, if care was taken not to amuse them with *false* Promises, which they very early discover, and which do but insensibly wean them from that veneration they ought always to have for Truth

Truth, and reconcile them by degrees to Falſehood, from which Nature is averſe: For which Reaſon it is excellent advice that is given by a Heathen Writer, *Maxima debetur puero reverentia*; Great heed ought to be taken not only what is *done*, but even what is *ſpoken* alſo in the preſence of a Child. SERM. XLVIII.

Laſtly, If we may not in other Caſes do any ſmall *evil, that good may come of it*; why ſhould it be thought lawful to Lie, though even for an appearance of publick advantage. Which *publick* Advantage is never indeed any Thing elſe, but the preſent Intereſt of ſome particular Party or Faſhion. And as for matters of *Religion*, it is certain nothing is more odious in the ſight of God, *than to accept* his *perſon, and ſpeak deceitfully for him*, as it is expreſſed, *Job.* xiii. 7. God is Truth, and his Religion is Truth; and Men might as well well undertake to make light darkneſs, or darkneſs light, as pretend to endeavour to advance the Truth of God, by making Lies and pious Frauds their Inſtrument. Thoſe of the Church of *Rome* have often been very guilty in this particular; and great occaſion has thereby been given to the Enemies of God to blaſpheme. For whilſt ſome ill-deſigning Men have pretented to advance the Intereſt of Religion, that is, their own Errours, by ſuch indirect means; others have been tempted to think that the whole is nothing but a Fiction; and that Religion itſelf has little countenance from Truth, when its profeſſours chooſe to make Lies their refuge.

It remains that after what has been ſaid, I make a practical obſervation or two, and ſo conclude. And

1*ſt*, *Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord*, ſaith *Solomon*, Prov. xii. 22; and Prov. vi. 16, &c. *Theſe ſix things doth the Lord hate, yea ſeven are an abomination unto him*; *A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that ſhed innocent blood, an heart that deviſeth wicked imaginations, feet that be ſwift in running to miſchief, a falſe witneſs that ſpeaketh Lies, and him that ſoweth diſcord among brethren.* And it is very obſervable, that both in the *Old* and *New Teſtament Idols* and corruptions in divine Worſhip, which are the greateſt abominations in the ſight of God, are deſcribed under the Name of Lies and Lying Vanities; and Idolaters, under the Title of Lyars. *Jeruſalem hath wearied herſelf with Lies*, i. e. with Idols; *Ezek.* xxiv. 12. So Rev. xxi. 8; *The fearful and unbelieving and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and ſorcerers, and idolaters, and all* Lyars, *ſhall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimſtone*; After which, giving a large deſcription of the heavenly *Jeruſalem*, he adds, ver. 27; *And there ſhall in no wiſe enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatſoever worketh abomination, or maketh a Lie*: And Rev. xxii. 15; *Without, are dogs, and ſorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whoſoever loveth and maketh a Lie.* God in Scripture is ſometimes called *Truth*; and as the perfection of Religion is the imitation of God in his communicable Attributes, ſo a neceſſary part of that imitation, is an endeavouring to be like him in his Veracity. *The Devil is a Lyar and the father of Lies*; *and they that follow him therein, are ſaid to be in covenant with Hell*; If. xxviii. 15; *We have made a Covenant with Death, and with hell are we at agreement*; *when the overflowing ſcourge ſhall paſs through, it ſhall not come unto us*; *for we have made Lies our refuge, and under falſehood have we hid ourſelves*: The puniſhment follows, ver. 17; *Therefore thus ſaith the Lord, Judgment will I lay to the line, and righteouſneſs to the plummet, and the hail ſhall ſweep away the refuge of Lies, and the waters ſhall overflow the hiding-place*; *and your Covenant with death ſhall be diſannulled, and your agreement with hell ſhall not ſtand*; *when the overflowing ſcourge ſhall paſs through, then ſhall ye be trodden down by it.* Again, *Jeremy* ix, ver. 5, 8 and 9; *They will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not ſpeak the truth*; *they have taught their tongue to ſpeak Lies, and weary themſelves to commit iniquity*; *Their tongue is an arrow ſhot out, it ſpeaketh deceit*; *one ſpeaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait: Shall I not viſit for theſe things, ſaith the Lord, and ſhall not my Soul be avenged on ſuch a Nation as this?*

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2*dly*, As Lies are thus abominable in the ſight of God, ſo are they alſo to all good Men; *A righteous man*, ſaith *Solomon hateth Lying*; Prov. xiii. 5: And King *David* in the ciſt *Pſalm*, which contains a brief account of his religious and pious Converſation, declares *that he would not ſo much as ſuffer a ſervant, that was uſed to tell Lies, to continue in his houſe*, ver. 6 and 7; *He that walketh in a perfect way, he ſhall ſerve me; but he that worketh deceit, ſhall not dwell within my houſe; he that telleth Lies ſhall not tarry in my ſight.*

3*dly*, This Sin of Lying tends in its own nature to the deſtruction of all civil ſociety; *Lie not one to another*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *for we are members one of another; members of the ſame* political *body, as we are men; and by a ſtricter tie, members of the ſame* myſtical *body, as we are chriſtians: Wherefore as there is one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptiſm, one God and Father of us all, ſo ought there to be one mind and one heart, with ſimplicity and ſincerity, that ſpeaking the truth in love we may grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Chriſt.*

SERMON

SERMON XLIX.

Uprightneſs a Man's greateſt Security.

PROV. x. 9.

He that walketh uprightly, walketh ſurely.

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IN all the vaſtly different Deſigns that men are carrying on in the World, and in all the variety of means which they make uſe of to purſue thoſe different Deſigns; the great care and buſineſs of their lives, the ſubject of all their thoughts and conſultations, is how to ſecure that which they eſteem their *chief* Intereſt, and how to purſue it upon the ſureſt grounds. He that can beſt order his affairs ſo, that notwithſtanding all the hazards he muſt neceſſarily run, and all the diſappointments he muſt probably meet withal, yet in the end he ſucceeds in his *main* deſign; is generally reputed a prudent and wiſe man: And if the ends which he purſues, be indeed as commendable, as the means which he makes uſe of are proper to thoſe ends; then he really *is*, what he is reputed to be, a truly wiſe Perſon. Now the great and ultimate End which all men in general purſue, and to which all other ends are but ſubordinate; is *Happineſs*: And he that can ſo direct his life, that whatſoever becomes of all other concerns, yet he may be ſure not to fail of this at laſt; acts the wiſeſt and moſt prudent part

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that it is poſſible for him to act. How to accompliſh *This* therefore; ought to be the great inquiry and ſtudy of our Lives; the principal ſubject of our thoughts and meditations. *Solomon*, to whom God gave a wiſe and underſtanding heart, ſo that before him there was none like him, neither ſhall any like him ariſe after him; who had carefully conſidered and throughly examined all things under the Sun; and was therefore moſt likely to give a true judgment of them; gives us *his* opinion of this whole matter in that affectionate concluſion of his Book of *Eccleſiaſtes*; ch. xii. 13; *Let us hear the concluſion of the whole matter; Fear God and keep his Commandments*, for This is the whole; *the whole duty, and the whole Happineſs of man*; This is that alone, which will carry him ſecurely through the World, and lead him without errour to his final Happineſs. Agreeable to which are the words of the Text; *He that walketh uprightly, walketh ſurely.* I ſhall firſt explain the words briefly; and then endeavour to prove the Truth of the aſſertion therein contained.

Now, *walking*, in Scripture ſtile, ſignifies, by an eaſy metaphor, the courſe of our Lives. Thus, *walking honeſtly* or deceitfully, *walking* in Light, in darkneſs, and the like; is nothing elſe but *living* righteouſly or wickedly, behaving a man's ſelf honeſtly or deceitfully in the World. Thus of *Enoch* it is ſaid that he walked *with God*, Gen. v. 24; that is, he *lived* piouſly and in the fear of God: And of *Noah*, Gen. vi. 9; *Noah was a juſt man, and perfect in his generation, and Noah* walked *with God*; the meaning is, he did not engage himſelf in the Sins of the People among whom he lived; but, in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe generation, obeyed the commandments of his God. On the contrary, *he that hateth his brother*, ſaith St. *John*, 1 Joh. ii. 11, *is in darkneſs, and* walketh *in darkneſs*; that is, he is no good Chriſtian, but goes on in a ſinful courſe of life. In like manner in St. *Paul's* exhortation to the *Romans*, ch. xiii. ver. 13; *Let us* walk *honeſtly as in the day*; that is, let us *live* and behave ourſelves honeſtly, as becometh ſuch, who enjoy the Light of the Goſpel of Chriſt; And in the words of the Text; *he that* walketh, *i. e.* that *lives uprightly.* The word which we render *uprightly*, ſignifies *in perfection* or with *integrity*; and denotes moſt properly, *Honeſty and Sincerity of intention*: So that *he that liveth uprightly*, is he who in the general courſe of his life bears a conſtant regard to God and his commandments; ſo as not to be prevailed upon by any intereſt or paſſion to undertake any thing, but what may conduce to the glory of God and his own future happineſs, or at leaſt not be inconſiſtent with thoſe two great ends. To *walk ſurely*, is to be in a ſafe condition; to be out of danger of falling into any extreme calamity; and to have our main intereſt ſo ſecured, that, notwithſtanding whatever may happen for a time, yet our great and chief deſigns ſhall certainly ſucceed happily in the end. The ſum therefore of the wiſe man's aſſertion, is briefly this; He that in the whole courſe of his life acts ſincerely and juſtly, with a continual reſpect to the Reaſon of things, and to the law of God; that carries on all his undertakings by fair and equitable means, avoiding all frauds and deceits, all baſe and unworthy practices; This man takes the wiſeſt and ſureſt courſe to ſucceed in all his deſigns, reſpecting either his preſent or his future Happineſs. Having thus briefly explained the words, I come now in the ſecond place to prove the Truth of the aſſertion; and That I ſhall endeavour to do from theſe three conſiderations; *1ſt*, That the upright man *begins* to act, or *ſets out* upon the beſt and ſureſt grounds; *2dly*, That in the continuance and whole courſe of his affairs, he has the greateſt probability not to fall into any conſiderable Diſappointment or Calamity; and *3dly*, That in the end and laſt iſſue of things, he has the utmoſt ſecurity, whatever diſappointments he may before meet with, that his deſigns ſhall then be crowned with the moſt perfect Succeſs.

I. *Firſt*; The upright man *begins* to act, or *ſets out* upon the beſt and ſureſt grounds. To the undertaking and proſecuting any deſign upon good grounds, it is requiſite, *1ſt*, That the Reaſons upon which a man undertakes it, be firm and ſtable, and ſuch as will not change; *2dly*, That he be well aſſured that the way he intends to go, will lead him right to that end; and *3dly*, That he

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be ſure not to miſtake that way. Now in all theſe reſpects the upright man evidently begins to act, or ſets out upon the beſt and moſt ſure grounds: For SERM. XLIX.

1ſt, The reaſons upon which he enters into ſuch a courſe of life, are firm and ſtable, and which will never change. That there is a God, who as he created all things by the word of his power, ſo he upholds and governs them by his all-wiſe Providence; that this Supreme Being takes notice of the lives and actions of Men; and, according to their different works, will reward or puniſh them, either in the preſent or in a future ſtate; That there is a natural and unchangeable Difference between Good and Evil; by chooſing of which reſpectively, we therefore render ourſelves acceptable in the ſight of God, or neceſſarily fall under his anger and diſpleaſure; That true peace and content of mind can ariſe only from Sincerity and Innocence of life, as Horrour and Anguiſh will certainly accompany Sin and guilt; laſtly, That all the real Happineſs of this world, conſiſts only in that quiet and peace of mind, and the joyful aſſurance of the favour of God, as all its real miſery does in a guilty and troubled conſcience, and the fearful expectation of the revelation of the wrath and righteous judgment of God: Theſe are ſome of the reaſons, upon which the upright man chooſes his courſe of life. As impoſſible therefore as it is for God not to be, or not to govern the world; as impoſſible as it is for that ſupreme Governour of the Univerſe, not to take notice of the lives and actions of men, and according to their different works to reward or puniſh them for them; as impoſſible as it is for the difference of Good and Evil to ceaſe, and for impiety to become acceptable in the ſight of God; laſtly, as impoſſible as it is for ſincerity and innocence of life, to fail of procuring true peace of mind; or wickedneſs, of cauſing horrour, anguiſh, and deſpair; ſo impoſſible is it for the reaſons, upon which the upright man chooſes his courſe of life, to ceaſe or alter. *Hence* his reſolutions become firm and unvariable, in all the viciſſitudes of Time and Fortune; and no ſtorm can make him waver from his main purpoſe, becauſe his hopes and expectations are founded upon a Rock, whoſe foundations are deeper than thoſe of Heaven and Earth. He is not liable to thoſe doubts and miſgivings, thoſe fears and anxieties, that uncertainty and ſollicitude, which is the endleſs uneaſineſs of other men's lives; becauſe he is infallibly certain that he acts upon good grounds, and that the reaſons he goes upon are permanent and unalterable. The reaſons upon which *worldly* men chooſe the crooked paths of Deceit and Wickedneſs, are either abſolutely falſe, and ſuch as have no real Being at all; or at leaſt ſuch as ceaſe and *alter* perpetually with the circumſtances and caſualties of Time; leaving them to repent, of having grounded their actions upon a foundation, which they knew not how ſoon the next ſtorm might waſh away. They who go on in a courſe of Sin, upon the hopes of impunity *here*, and ſome ſlight arguments againſt the certainty of a ſtate of recompence *hereafter*; do for the moſt part *here*, but without fail *hereafter*, find that the ground they went upon, was abſolutely falſe. They who upon This imagination, that ſenſual pleaſure is their chief good, make That the only object of their hopes and endeavours; do find in Age or Sickneſs that they were totally miſtaken: and that the remembrance of thoſe pleaſures, whereof they thought the enjoyment their only happineſs, is indeed a moral real and laſting Miſery. They who upon an opinion that Riches are their chief happineſs, proſecute the deſign of growing wealthy, by all the indirect means of fraud and deceit, of unrighteouſneſs and over-reaching their neighbours; do very ſeldom enjoy that ſatisfaction long, before they become ſenſible, that they had not ſufficient reaſon, to make ſhipwreck of a good conſcience for its ſake. Honour, Paſſion, Humour, and the like, are ſtill far weaker and more mutable grounds of action; ſo that he who is guided by *them*, muſt needs be *wavering* and unſtable in all his ways, *like a ſhip toſſed about with every blaſt of wind*; Jam. i. 6. But now he that upon the forementioned grounds walks in the ſtreight paths of uprightneſs and ſincerity, is ſure that the reaſons he goes upon are true, and that they are eternally and unchangeably ſo.

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2*dly*, As the Reaſons upon which the upright man acts, are firm and ſtable; and ſuch as will never change; ſo he is well aſſured that the way he reſolves to walk in, will lead him directly to his intended end. For, both by the natural Tendency of things, (as I ſhall preſently have occaſion more particularly to explain,) has he the beſt probableneſs of Succeſs *at preſent*; and by the promiſe of God he is infallibly aſcertained, that at leaſt *finally* he ſhall not fail of being happy *hereafter*: Whereas, on the contrary, in the ways of unrighteouſneſs and iniquity, ambitious and covetous men, who for the obtaining of Riches or Pleaſure makes uſe of ſinful and indirect means, do not only find that the reaſons upon which they proſecute thoſe deſigns by ſuch means, are weak and falſe, but alſo very often that thoſe means *themſelves* are inſufficient to obtain thoſe ends. For beſides that they are never ſure but God may blaſt their deſigns by ſome peculiar Providence, as he very frequently does; Beſides this, I ſay, how often do they fall into *diſhonour* by thoſe *very* indirect means, by which they were endeavouring to raiſe themſelves to *honour*; and by a diſcovery of their Fraud and Injuſtice, deprive themſelves wholly of that very profit, which they deſigned to gain more expeditiouſly, as they imagined, by thoſe ſhorter methods of Unrighteouſneſs? The upright man has both the promiſe of God and the natural conſtitution of things, to ſecure him from failing in his great deſigns; than which what greater ſecurity can be deſired? But of this more fully when I come to ſhow, that the upright man in the continuance of his courſe has the greateſt probability not to fall into any conſiderable diſappointment, or at leaſt, whatever diſappointments he may before meet with, that yet at the final upſhot of things, he ſhall be ſure to be crowned with the moſt compleat Succeſs: Wherefore

3*dly*, As the upright man is well aſſured that the way he intends to walk in, will lead him right to his deſigned end; ſo he is very certain that he ſhall not miſtake that way. The paths of Virtue and Righteouſneſs are plain and ſtreight; ſo that the blind, *i. e.* perſons of the meaneſt capacity, with an upright intention, ſhall not err therein. The ways of iniquity and injuſtice, of fraud and deceit, are infinitely various and uncertain; full of intricate mazes, perplexity, and obſcurity: It requires great skill and induſtry to find out ſuch methods of over-reaching our neighbours, as will have any probability of ſucceſs; it requires much ſtudy and intentneſs, to manage the deſign to the beſt advantage; and it cannot but cauſe much ſollicitude of mind, to be always in fear of being diſappointed by a diſcovery. How many do we meet with in the world, who (out of a greedy deſire of a little greater gain) endeavouring to over-reach and deceive their neighbours, have for want of laying their contrivances cunningly enough, and managing them with ſecrecy and advantage, fallen ſhort of that gain which they might without farther trouble have gotten in the plain way of Honeſty and Uprightneſs? But now Uprightneſs and Sincerity is a plain and a ſmooth road; and though perhaps not always the ſhorteſt way to Riches and Honour; yet he that keeps conſtantly on in this path, is ſurer not to miſtake his way and loſe himſelf, than he that climbs over rocks and precipices in hopes of coming ſooner to his journey's end. The upright man lays no projects which it is the intereſt of his neighbour to hinder from ſucceeding; and therefore he needs no indirect methods, no fraudulent and deceitful practices, to ſecure his own Intereſt by undermining his neighbour's: He frames no deſigns, (if he be in a *private* ſtation,) which depend much upon Secrecy for ſucceſs; and therefore he is not in a continual anxiety and ſollicitude of mind, leſt a diſcovery ſhould make them prove abortive. In a word, as the ways of Iniquity are rough and ſlippery, dark and crooked, intricate and perplexing; ſo the paths of Uprightneſs are clear and even, plain and direct, that the wayfaring men, though fools, ſhall not err therein. *The way of the wicked*, ſaith *Solomon*, *is as darkneſs, they know not at what they ſtumble*; *But the path of the juſt is as the ſhining light, that ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day*; Prov. iv. 18, 19. And This of the 1*ſt* thing I propoſed, namely, that the upright man *begins* to act, or ſets out upon the beſt and ſureſt grounds.

II. *Secondly*;

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II. *Secondly*; In the *continuance* and whole courſe of his affairs, he has the greateſt probability not to fall into any conſiderable diſappointment or calamity. And that for theſe two reaſons. *1ſt*, Becauſe the way of Uprightneſs is in itſelf freeſt from danger, and, according to the natural conſtitution of things, leaſt liable to misfortunes and Diſappointments; and *2dly*, Becauſe it is moreover guarded and protected, by the peculiar favour and providence of God. *Prov.* iv. 11, 12; *I have taught thee in the way of Wiſdom, I have led thee in right paths: When thou goeſt, thy ſteps ſhall not be ſtraitned; and when thou runneſt, thou ſhalt not ſtumble.* That the way of Uprightneſs is in itſelf freeſt from danger, and according to the natural conſtitution of things, leaſt liable to misfortunes and diſappointments; muſt needs be confeſſed, by every one that conſiders the nature of things, the general cauſes of men's miſeries and calamities, and the true and natural tendency of Uprightneſs and Sincerity. If the conſtitution of things be evidently ſuch, that the Society of mankind and the Peace of the world cannot poſſibly be maintained without ſome degree of Faith and Sincerity amongſt men; and that the leſs of this Uprightneſs there be found in the world, ſo much the nearer things draw to confuſion and diſſolution: If the general cauſes of mens misfortunes and diſappointments, lie manifeſtly in their own Irregularities and Diſorders; and the ruin of moſt men be evidently owing, to their own deceitful and indirect practices: as (I think) it cannot be denied to be: Then is Uprightneſs undeniably the ſecureſt and leaſt dangerous courſe. If the ſecuring our good name and reputation in the world; if the gaining the generality of mankind, the beſt and wiſeſt of them at leaſt, to be our friends; if the making our *private* intereſt the ſame with the *publick*, and founding the hopes of our *own* advantages not on the *ruin* but *proſperity* of our *neighbours*; be the likelieſt way to proſper in the world; then has Uprightneſs clearly the advantage. For, what certainer method can a man take, to ſecure his credit and reputation, than to do nothing, but what the *more* nicely and exactly it be ſcanned, the greater approbation it will be ſure to receive? And what better and more effectual means can a man make uſe of, to ſecure to himſelf laſting and beneficial Friendſhips; than *to lead an uncorrupted life, and to do the thing which is right, and ſpeak the truth from his heart; to uſe no deceit in his tongue, nor do evil to his neighbour; but to ſwear to his neighbour, and diſappoint him not, though it be to his own hindrance*; as it is expreſſed, *Pſal.* xv. ver. 2, 3, 5.

But farther; as Uprightneſs is *in itſelf* the ſafeſt and leaſt dangerous courſe; ſo is it moreover guarded by the peculiar favour and providence of God. He that lives uprightly, in a conſtant and ſincere regard to all God's commands; is an immediate Servant and Imitator of God; a Promoter of his glory, and of the eſtabliſhment of his Kingdom upon Earth: And beſides that it is the nature of infinite Goodneſs to delight in the proſperity of his Servants; and to make thoſe perſons partakers of his *happineſs*, who have endeavoured to be like him in *holineſs* and purity; he has moreover obliged himſelf by innumerable promiſes in Scripture, *That thoſe who truſt in him, ſhall be ſafe under the ſhadow of his wings*, i. e. under his Almighty protection. *He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lift up his Soul unto vanity, nor ſworn deceitfully; he ſhall receive the bleſſing from the Lord, and righteouſneſs from the God of his Salvation*; Pſ. xxiv. ver. 4 and 5. And *Pſ.* xv; the Royal prophet having given a particular deſcription of a juſt and upright man through the whole *Pſalm*, concludes all with theſe words, *He that doth theſe things ſhall never fall*; or, as we elſewhere render it, *ſhall never be moved.* Which words are thus paraphraſed by the Prophet *Iſaiah*, ch. xxxiii. ver. 15, 16; *He that walketh righteouſly, and ſpeaketh uprightly; he that deſpiſeth the gain of oppreſſion; that ſhaketh his hands from holding of bribes; that ſtoppeth his Ears from hearing of blood, and ſhutteth his Eyes from ſeeing evil; He ſhall dwell on high; his place of defence ſhall be the munition of rocks; his bread ſhall be given him, his water ſhall be ſure:* The meaning is; he that is juſt and righteous in all his dealings, ſhall by the favourable protection of the Divine Providence, as by an impregnable

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fortreſs, be defended againſt all extreme calamities. Whether God does this by inclining the hearts of men to be favourable to thoſe that are truly and ſincerely good, as the Scripture ſeems ſometime to intimate, as when he is ſaid to have ſtirred up the heart of *Cyrus* King of *Perſia* to make a proclamation for the rebuilding of *Jeruſalem*, and to have given *Nehemiah* favour in the Eyes of *Artaxerxes*, and *Daniel* in the Eyes of *Darius*, and *Joſeph* in the ſight of the *Egyptians*, and the like; or whether he does it by ſo diſpoſing the operations of ſecond cauſes, as to defeat the deſigns of the wicked, and make all things work together for good to them that fear him; we need not now inquire. That he does ſome way interpoſe to preſerve and protect the righteous, is a moſt certain truth, and the Scripture every where atteſts it and confirms it by examples. It is ſaid of *David*, and the whole courſe of his life ſufficiently demonſtrates it, *that the Lord preſerved him whitherſoever he went*; 2 Sam. viii. 6. But not to inſtance in particulars, the whole *Jewiſh* Nation are an eminent and continued example of this, as will appear to any one who reads the Hiſtory of that people from the coming out of *Egypt* to their final captivity in *Babylon*. In like manner that in the Primitive times a few weak and reſiſtleſs Chriſtians, ſhould bear up againſt the united force and counſel of the *Roman* Empire; a few weak and good men, againſt the open violence of lawleſs and outragious oppreſſors; nay that they ſhould thrive and proſper, increaſe and multiply, whilſt their adverſaries by apparent judgments or ſecret curſes dwindled away and periſhed; is a thing not to be conceived without the immediate interpoſition of the divine Providence. It is true indeed, that now under the Goſpel diſpenſation, wherein life and immortality are more clearly brought to light, and the rewards and puniſhments of virtue or vice more expreſsly referred to a future ſtate, God ſeems not to concern himſelf in ſuch a peculiar manner, and by ſuch remarkable providences to ſecure the proſperity of good men in this world, as he did formerly under the Moſaical diſpenſation; The way of virtue ſeems now to be more accompanied with danger, and to lie more open to the misfortunes and calamities of the world; and it muſt be confeſſed that good men are now more frequently perſecuted, and oftner given up into the hands of their enemies, and delivered to the will of their mercileſs oppreſſors: But yet certainly it is ſtill true, that the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and that his Providence ſtill watches over them for good; 'Tis ſtill true, that Godlineſs hath the promiſe of this life as well as of that which is to come; and excepting the ſingle caſe of perſecution for religion, I believe it is ſtill certain in experience, that upright and religious men do more generally in the whole courſe of their lives thrive and proſper in their worldly concerns, and meet with fewer calamities and diſappointments, than ſuch as endeavour to enrich themſelves by ſiniſter and indirect means. Excepting, I ſay, the caſe of perſecution for religion: For in that caſe indeed, I do not ſee how religious men can be ſaid to have the advantage in this world, when *St. Paul* himſelf confeſſes, *that if in* this *life only they had hope, they were of all men the moſt miſerable*; 1 Cor. xv. 19. Therefore One caſe it muſt be confeſſed there is, wherein pious and ſincere perſons *cannot* indeed enjoy the benefit of theſe promiſes; And that is, in the caſe of perſecution for religion: But then in That caſe, their comfort is, that their hope is not only in this Life: They have a joyful expectation of a future and a better ſtate; and That expectation is many times ſo glorious and ſo comfortable, as to make them evidently more happy, even under the ſevereſt Perſecutions, than their perſecutors are in their greateſt ſplendour and glory. And this I ſuppoſe is that which our Saviour intends, when he promiſes that there ſhall be no one *who ſhall leave father, or mother, or wife or children, or houſes, or lands for his ſake and the Goſpel's, who ſhall not in* this *world receive an hundred fold*, that is, ſuch comfortable aſſiſtance and joy in the Holy Ghoſt, as infinitely exceeds all worldly enjoyments. Thus the upright man through the whole courſe of his life, from his firſt beginning to act, to the time of his departure out of this world, has evidently in all reſpects the advantage over the wicked. How much

more

more *at* and *after* death will he appear to have choſen infinitely the wiſeſt part? And this is the

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III. *Third* thing I propoſed to ſhow; namely, That in the *End* and laſt iſſue of things, the upright man has the utmoſt ſecurity, whatever diſappointments he may before meet withal, that his deſigns ſhall then be crowned with the moſt perfect Succeſs. It is the event and final iſſue of things, that determines the wiſdom or folly of any action. Many undertakings may ſeem wiſe or fooliſh, to him that looks no farther than the preſent; which to another, who can foreſee the end of things, may have a very different aſpect. *David* when he conſidered the preſent proſperity of the Wicked, without looking any further; was very much ſhaken in mind, and almoſt tempted to pronounce their condition happy; but when he went into the temple of God, and conſidered the end of thoſe men, he ſaw good reaſon to alter his opinion, and wonder at the ſhort-ſightedneſs of his former judgment. He that renounces his Title to a large eſtate in reverſion, for ſome very ſmall and inconſiderable preſent advantage, may to heedleſs perſons ſeem to make a wiſer bargain, than he who parts with ſome preſent advantages for good ſecurity of far greater ones to come. But whoever can look to the end of things, when time ſhall bring That to be preſent which is now remote, and ſhall repreſent it in its true value; will ſee that this other makes ſo much the wiſer choice, as the future advantage is greater than the preſent. Now This, and generally much *more* unequal than this, is the caſe between the righteous man and the wicked. For, the righteous man ſecures to himſelf his *eternal* Intereſt, and yet at the ſame time runs no greater hazard of his *temporal*, than the wicked man does; whereas on the contrary the wicked man, without at all ſecuring his *temporal* Happineſs, forfeits for nothing his title to that which is *eternal*. But more particularly; The upright man will at the *end* appear to have choſen the wiſer courſe,

1ſt, Upon account of that peace of conſcience which will attend him, *at* the hour of death. *The work of righteouſneſs ſhall be peace, and the effect of righteouſneſs quietneſs and aſſurance for ever*; Iſai. xxxii. 17. When he looks back upon his paſt life, and finds that in the general courſe thereof he has with ſimplicity and ſincerity obeyed the dictates of his own conſcience; that his actions have not been biaſſed by paſſion or appetite, by any mean, unlawful, or private intereſt; but that he has done all things in obedience to the law of God; with a ſincere deſign of promoting only the glory of God, the Welfare of his Neighbour, and his own true and eternal Intereſt; in a word, that whatever *particular* infirmities he may have been guilty of, yet the *main*, the *general*, the *prevailing* deſign of his life, has always been upright and ſincere; the Reſult of this, muſt needs be ſuch a joy and ſatisfaction of mind, as is infinitely preferable to all other pleaſures in the world. He can look upon Death, that *King* of terrours to the wicked, to be to *Himſelf* a paſſage only into that ſtate, where he is as ſure of being made happy, as he *is* that true Holineſs is acceptable to God, and cannot fail of being rewarded by him. This is the eſtate of a truly ſincere and righteous man at the hour of death. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright*; *for the end of that man is peace*; Pſ. xxxvii. 37.

2dly, The Wiſdom of the upright man's choice, appears ſtill *more* compleat, by conſidering the greatneſs of that Happineſs which will attend him *after* Death; a ſtate of joy unſpeakable and full of glory; of glories, *which eye has not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entred into the heart of man to conceive.* All the hope, all the poſſible ground, that a wicked man can proceed upon, is that vain and unreaſonable ſurmize, that poſſibly there may be no ſuch future ſtate, no judgment, no Happineſs, no Miſery to come: And were this his vain hope to prove true, 'tis manifeſt he could gain nothing by it more than the righteous, in that ſtate where all things would be equally forgotten; whereas if it proves falſe, he is miſerable and undone for ever. On the contrary, the upright man's aſſurance is, that after this ſhort and tranſitory life, there will ſucceed an eternal ſtate of Rewards and Puniſhments, wherein God the righteous Judge ſhall render to every man according to what he has done in the fleſh, whether

This is an error. The quotation is made from the 73 Pſ. which appears to have been written by Aſaph. JR

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it be good or evil: And were this his hope to prove falſe, it is evident he runs no hazard of being more miſerable than the wicked, when Both were to *be* no more. But if theſe things be true, (as he has all poſſible evidence that they are,) he is unſpeakably happy, and that for ever. And is not this undeniably, walking moſt ſurely and moſt wiſely? Is not this, building upon the ſtrongeſt foundation? As certainly as there *is* a God, and that That God concerns himſelf in the government of the world; As certainly as Vice is odious, and Virtue acceptable and well-pleaſing in his ſight; As certainly as ſuch a juſt God will reward thoſe who obey his Laws, and puniſh thoſe who affront and deſpiſe them; ſo certain is it, that the upright man ſhall be juſtified and fully rewarded, at the final judgment and deciſion of things; in the day when God ſhall judge the ſecrets of men by *Jeſus Chriſt*. *The wicked worketh a deceitful work, but to him that ſoweth righteouſneſs ſhall be a ſure reward*; Prov. xi. 18. What the upright man has *done*, ſhall then be vindicated and approved; and what he has *ſuffered*, ſhall be abundantly made good; every thing ſhall then be perfectly laid open, and expoſed in its true and proper light; Plainneſs and Sincerity, ſhall then appear the moſt perfect beauty; and the craftineſs of men who lie in wait to deceive, be ſtript of all its colours; All ſpecious pretences, all the methods of deceit, ſhall then be diſcloſed before men and angels; and no artifice, no falſe colours, to conceal the deformity of iniquity, ſhall there take place. In a word, the ill-deſigning men of this world ſhall then with ſhame be convinced, that That upright Simplicity, which they deſpiſed and derided, is the trueſt Wiſdom; and that thoſe diſhoneſt arts, which they ſo highly eſteemed, were in reality the meereſt Folly: Then ſhall it appear, *that the Fear of the Lord*, That *only is Wiſdom, and to depart from evil*, That *alone is Underſtanding*. And *when they ſee the exaltation of the righteous in that day they ſhall be forced to exclaim*, (as it is expreſſed in the vth of *Wiſdom*, ver. 4 and 5,) *We fools accounted his life madneſs, and his end to be without honour; How is he numbred among the children of God, and his lot is among the Saints!*

SERMON

SERMON L.

Religion consists in keeping the Commandments only.

REV. xxii. 14.

Bleſſed are they that do his Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life.

THE Books of Scripture having ſet before men, in the cleareſt Light, the *Commandments of God*, as the *Rule of their Duty*; and the *Happineſs* he has promiſed them, as the *Reward of their Obedience*; are, at the concluſion of the Whole, cloſed up with this *noble and majeſtick*, as well as *affectionate* exclamation; *Bleſſed are they that do his Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life.*

The word, *Bleſſed*, is in This Place particularly *emphatical*; becauſe it is the *Reſult* or *Concluſion* of a *large and diſtinct* deſcription of the Happineſs of Heaven, under the Similitude of a *City* whoſe *Streets* were *pure gold*, and her *Walls and Buildings* of *precious Stones*; In which the *Tabernacle of God* ſhall be fixt among

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The *Tree of Life* was the Antient and Original Emblem of *Immortality. Gen.* ii. 9; *Out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every Tree that is pleaſant to the ſight, and good for Food; the* Tree of Life *alſo in the midſt of the garden.* The Meaning is: God furniſhed our firſt parents in Paradiſe, with every thing that was needful to complete their Happineſs; and, as the principal part of All, he put them in a *poſſibility* of obtaining *Immortality*, without paſſing through Death at all. *Adam* was not; (as ſome have, without Any ground from Scripture, imagined;) Our firſt parent, I ſay, was not created *actually immortal:* But he was created with a *poſſibility* of *eſcaping Death*, and of *becoming immortal* without ever dying. The *Means* by which Fleſh and Blood was to have been preſerved from mortality, to which it could not but be by nature ſubject; was the Uſe of the *Tree of Life.* This appears, *Gen.* iii. 22; *And now leſt the man put forth his hand, and take alſo of the Tree of Life, and eat and live for ever; therefore the Lord God ſent him forth from the garden of Eden.* The expreſſion, *leſt the man put forth his hand, and take of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live for ever*; ſhows plainly and undeniably, that Man was not created *naturally immortal*; but that, by the Uſe of the *Tree of Life*, (whatever is implied under that expreſſion,) he was to have been preſerved from dying. By *Sin*, our firſt Parent forfeited this high Privilege; being from thenceforth juſtly excluded out of the Paradiſe of God, and put out of the reach of the *Tree of Life.* That is; He was, by the righteous ſentence of God, left ſubject to That Mortality which in the courſe of Nature muſt neceſſarily and unavoidably come upon *Him* and his *Poſterity*, when they were no longer ſuffered to have recourſe to This miraculous Means of being preſerved from Death. And This is the meaning of that figurative expreſſion, *Gen.* iii. 24. *The Lord God placed Cherubims and a flaming Sword, to keep the way of the Tree of Life:* Man, being excluded out of Paradiſe, had no longer any poſſibility of eſcaping That Death to which the natural mortality, in which he was created, made him neceſſarily Subject.

But though from henceforth there was no more poſſibility of eſcaping Death, it being irreverſibly appointed for all men once to die: yet through the redemption purchaſed for us by Chriſt, we are now reſtored to a poſſibility of obtaining That immortality *after* Death, which our firſt Parent had in his Power to have obtained *without dying.* And this bringing again of *Life and Immortality to Light through* the Goſpel, is in the *New Teſtament* elegantly ſet forth by the ſame Ancient Emblem, the *Tree of Life.* Rev. ii. 7; *He that hath an Ear*, (he that is unprejudiced) "let him hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the "Churches; To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the *Tree of Life*, "which is in the midſt of the Paradiſe of God. *Chap.* xxii. 2; In the midſt "of

" of the Street was the *Tree of Life*, which yeilded her Fruit every month; and " the Leaves of the Tree were for the Healing of the Nations " And again, in the Words of the Text, at the concluſion of the whole Book; *Bleſſed are they that do his Commandments, that they may have Right to the* Tree of Life. SERM. L.

The word, which we render, may have *Right*; is, in the Original, may have *Power*; may have free *Admiſſion*: As, 2 *Pet.* i. 11; *So an Entrance ſhall be miniſtred unto you abundantly, into the everlaſting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.* But had the word been literally, as we tranſlate it; may have *Right*; yet even ſo, the expreſſion would have afforded no foundation to the *Romiſh* Doctrine of *Merit*. For *Merit* ſignifies ſuch a claim of Right, as is founded upon a *natural proportion* between the *Work* and the *Reward*. But *ſuch a Right*, as ariſes merely from the Performance of certain *Conditions*, to which Conditions there is freely annexed a Reward, Great and infinitely Diſproportionate to the Conditions performed; *ſuch a Right*, I ſay, does not at all diminiſh from the *Reward's* being merely a *Free Gift*. God has been pleaſed freely, of his mere Grace and Bounty, without any original Obligation, to promiſe eternal Life to them that obey him. Obedience was our indiſpenſable Duty, whether he had made any ſuch Promiſe, or no: And when we have obeyed his Will to the beſt of our Power, we have ſtill *merited* nothing at his Hands, more than barely the eſcaping of Puniſhment; having done only what was our Duty to do. Nevertheleſs, God having been graciouſly pleaſed to annex to ſuch Obedience the Promiſe of eternal Life; from That Promiſe there does ariſe, to ſuch as perform the Conditions, a *Right* to the Reward: Which *Right* at the ſame time, has nothing of *Merit* in it; becauſe That very *Right itſelf* is founded entirely on ſuch a *Free Gift*, as God was under No Obligation of ving beſtowed at all.

The *Laſt* Phraſe to be conſidered in the Text, is, that of *Doing his Commandments:* Bleſſed are they, that *Do his Commandments*. Concerning which Phraſe, there needs *This only* to be obſerved; that it is emphatically expreſſive of that Righteouſneſs or virtuous Practice, which is the Eſſence and the End of true Religion. And to That of St. *John*, 1 Joh. iii. 7; *Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doth righteouſneſs, is righteous:* And of St. *Paul*, Rom. ii. 13; *Not the Hearers of the Law are juſt before God, but the* Doers *of the Law ſhall be juſtified.*

Having thus given a particular Explication of the ſeveral *Phraſes* made uſe of in the Text; The *general Doctrinal Obſervation* ariſing now naturally from the Whole, is This: That Whatever elſe, beſides *keeping the Commandments of God* in the courſe of a virtuous and good Life, according to the Rules delivered in the Goſpel; goes among vain men under the Name and Character of Religion, and is weakly and ſuperſtitiouſly valued or eſteemed as ſuch, is All of it Errour and Deceit. Let no man deceive us with vain Words: For *Bleſſed are They* only, *who* Do *his Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life.*

The *Errours* contrary to this great and fundamental Truth, and which conſequently ſubvert the Whole Deſign of Chriſtianity, are ſuch as follow.

1ſt, Some have imagined themſelves entitled to the Rewards of the Goſpel, merely upon account of their *profeſſing* themſelves *Chriſtians*; and of their obſerving certain outward Forms, Rites and Ceremonies, by which they think *Chriſtians* diſtinguiſh themſelves from thoſe of other denominations. Juſt as the *Jews* of old, eſteemed themſelves the peculiar People and Favourites of God, merely on account of their being deſcended from the Patriarch *Abraham*, and diſtinguiſhed as ſuch by Circumciſion. But, in like manner as St. *Paul* argued againſt ſuch fooliſh *Jews*, *Rom.* ix. 6; *that they were not all Iſrael, which were of Iſrael; Neither becauſe they were the Seed of Abraham, were they all children*; For that *they which are the children of the fleſh, theſe are not the children of God, but the children of the Promiſe are counted for the Seed*; And ch. iv, 12; that *Abraham* was the *Father*, not to *them of the circumciſion only*, but *to Them alſo that walk in the Steps of the* Faith *of our father Abraham:* And ch, ii. 28; that *he is not a*

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Jew which is one outwardly, but he——which is one inwardly; and that *Circumciſion is that of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter:* So our Saviour, in the very *ſame* manner, and with the *ſame* Plainneſs and Earneſtneſs, argues againſt ſuch *Chriſtians* as valued themſelves merely upon their Profeſſion, *Matt.* vii. 21; *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that* doth *the will of my Father which is in Heaven.* Vain men, who have no true Senſe of Virtue and real Goodneſs, are apt to imagine, that profeſſing *themſelves Chriſtians*, and being diligent perhaps in certain external Forms and Ceremonies of Religion; is *being* in *Chriſt*, being *members of his Body*, and *received* (as it were) *into the Ark of Chriſt's Church.* But the Scripture on the contrary expreſsly declares, that no man is *in Chriſt*, (whatever his *Profeſſion* be, and whatever his Zeal for any outward Performances may be,) if he is not a *new Creature*, if he is not effectually reformed in his life and manners, 2 *Cor.* v. 17; and that, except a man be *born of the* Spirit, as well as of *Water*, he *cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. Bleſſed* therefore *are they*, (not, who *profeſs* his *religion*, but) *who* Do *his Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life.*

2*dly*; Others have conceived, that undoubtedly All the Promiſes in the Goſpel belonged to *Them*; becauſe they have, *not only profeſſed* the *Religion* of *Chriſt*, but have been *eminent* alſo and *conſpicuous* in his Church; have been endued perhaps with great *Gifts* and *Abilities*, with great *Power* and *Authority*; and have with *Zeal* promoted the temporal Eſtabliſhment and Dignity of the *Chriſtian Name* upon Earth. But This alſo our Saviour admoniſhes us carefully to diſtinguiſh, from That Virtue and Righteouſneſs of Life, That Juſtice and Goodneſs, That Meekneſs, Temperance and Charity; which alone will at the day of Judgment be accepted unto eternal Life. *Matt.* vii. 22; *Many will ſay to me in That day, Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy Name, and in thy Name have caſt out Devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful Works? And then will I profeſs unto them: I never knew you; Depart from Me ye that work Iniquity. There ſhall weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth, when ye ſhall ſee——yourſelves thruſt out: And others ſhall come from the Eaſt and from the Weſt, and from the North and from the South,* (men of true virtue, piety and charity, out of all Nations under Heaven,) *and ſhall ſit down in the Kingdom of God.* The ſame Notion is again, with great emphaſis, expreſſed by our Lord to his Diſciples; when at their returning to him with Joy upon the Devils being ſubject unto them through his Name, he thus admoniſhes them, *Luke* x. 19; *Behold, I give unto you Power——over All the Power of the Enemy;——Notwithſtanding, in This rejoice not, that the Spirits are ſubject unto you; but rather rejoice, becauſe your Names are written in Heaven:* Written in Heaven; That is, Not, by an *abſolute, unalterable and unconditionate Decree*; (for, *him that ſinneth againſt me*, ſaith God, *will I* blot *out of my Book*; and, of Tranſgreſſors, *They ſhall not*, ſays he, *be* written *in the Writing of my People*;) But, having *their Names written in Heaven*, ſignifies, being approved and accepted of God, upon account of their ſincere *Love of Truth*, and *Practice of Virtue. Bleſſed are they*, (not who have Great extraordinary *Gifts* and *Abilities*; not, who have perhaps Great *Eminence* and *Authority*; not, who are endued with *Power*, even to *work Miracles*; But *bleſſed are they*,) *who* in the ſincere Practice of Univerſal Virtue and Charity, Do *his Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life.*

Luke xiii. 28.

3*dly*; Others there are, who have eſteemed and valued themſelves upon a fanciful and enthuſiaſtick *Knowledge* of Chriſt; as if by certain unaccountable fond Notions, and Expreſſions of imaginary *Love* towards him, they could obtain his perſonal Favour and Affection. This groundleſs Conceit, the Apoſtle St. *John* cuts up by the Roots, 1 *John* ii. 3; *Hereby*, ſaith he, (by This *One* way only, in Oppoſition to all Enthuſiaſtick Imaginations whatſoever; *Hereby* only,) *do we know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments*; *He that ſaith, I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him*; *But whoſo keepeth his word, in Him verily is the Love of God perfected.* Were Any *Other Knowledge* or *Love* of Chriſt, beſides This One which expreſ-

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ſes itſelf in doing his Commandments; Were (I ſay) Any *Other Knowledge* or *Love* of Chriſt, of Any Uſe or Value; moſt reaſonably might it have been expected to have been of Advantage to Thoſe, who *perſonally converſed* with him here upon Earth, and *ſaw* his Glory, and *heard* the gracious Words of his *Mouth*. Yet concerning ſome of Theſe, who *heard* him (it ſeems,) but did not *Do* what he ſaid; but valued themſelves however, upon their perſonal familiarity with him; we find him declaring, "Luk. xiii. 26; Then ſhall ye begin to "ſay, We have eaten and drunk in thy preſence, and thou haſt taught in our "Streets; But he ſhall ſay, I tell you, I know you not whence you are; de-"part from Me, all ye Workers of Iniquity." Nay, even with regard to his *own Diſciples*, who *ſo* ſaw and heard him, as to believe and *obey* his Word; and to whom he had himſelf declared, "Matt. xiii. 16; Bleſſed are your Eyes, "for they ſee; and your Ears, for they hear: For verily I ſay unto you, that "many Prophets and Righteous men have deſired to ſee thoſe things which "Ye ſee, and have not ſeen them; and to hear thoſe things which Ye hear, and have not heard them:" Even with regard to theſe very Diſciples, that this Bleſſedneſs of Theirs might not be placed upon a miſtaken foot, he ſays, "Bleſſed (*that is*, more bleſſed,) are they that have not ſeen, and yet have be-"lieved. *Nay, ſtill further*; When one ſaid unto him, *Matt.* xii. 47; Behold "thy Mother and thy Brethren ſtand without, deſiring to ſpeak with thee; "He anſwered, Who is my Mother, and who are my Brethren? And ſtretch-"ing forth his hands towards his Diſciples, he ſaid, Behold my Mother and "my Brethren; For whoſoever ſhall do the Will of my Father which is in "Heaven, the ſame is my Brother, and Siſter, and Mother." And when a Woman among the Multitude, admiring at the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of his Diſcourſe, liſt up her voice, and ſaid, *Bleſſed is the Womb that bare thee, and the Paps which thou haſt ſucked*; immediately he replied, *Yea rather, Bleſſed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.* They of the Church of *Rome*, who are ſo apt to place I know not what imaginary virtue, in the *Blood*, and *Relicks*, and *Bones* of Dead *Saints*; would do well to conſider, how little Virtue our Saviour here declares there was, in having born the neareſt relation even to his *Own* Living *Body*. And they who flatter themſelves with the great Benefits they hope to reap by paying forbidden Honours and Will-worſhip to the *Bleſſed Virgin*, ſhould obſerve how our Lord, as it were on purpoſe to prevent All Superſtition of That kind, ſeems, not only upon Other occaſions, to affect in *general* to ſpeak with ſmall regard to her, *Woman, what have I to do with Thee*; but moreover, in the paſſage now before us, he ſeems to diminiſh expreſsly and in *particular*, that which is the whole foundation of the Honour they would deſire to pay her, he ſeems (I ſay) expreſsly to diminiſh the Value even of the *Relation* ſhe ſtood in to *Him himſelf*. *Relation*, comparatively ſpeaking, he would allow no one to bear to *Him*; any otherwiſe than as they were, *with* Him, Obſervers of his Father's Commandments. This was the great Bond, of Unity and Affection; and in it, all *Other* affinity was entirely ſwallowed up. *Henceforth*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *know we no man after the Fleſh*; *yea though we have known Chriſt* [himſelf] *after the fleſh, yet now henceforth know we him no more:* There is Now, *neither Greek nor Few, circumciſion nor uncircumciſion, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free*; *but Chriſt*, (Obedience to the Goſpel of Chriſt,) *is all, and in all:* And *In* Chriſt, *Circumciſion is nothing, and Uncircumciſion is nothing*, (Forms and Ceremonies of all other diſtinctions are nothing,) *but the keeping the Commandments of God.* And to the ſame Purpoſe it is, that our Lord tells his Diſciples, *Joh.* xvi. 7; *I tell you the Truth*; *it is expedient for you that I go away*; *For—if I depart, I will ſend the Comforter unto you.* His Meaning is, that the *ſpiritual* Gifts and Graces worked in men by the Aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, and bringing forth the Fruits of Righteouſneſs and ſincere Obedience, bring Men nearer to Chriſt, and unite them to him in a truer and more ſtrict Alliance, than even converſing with Himſelf perſonally upon Earth *according to the Fleſh*. *Bleſſed therefore are they*, (not who fancy they *converſe with Chriſt* by

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Joh. xx. 29.

Luke xi. 27.

2 Cor. v. 16.

Col. iii. 11.

Gal. v. 6.

1 Cor. vii. 19.

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4thly; Others have imagined, that by *laying hold on Chriſt* with a *ſtrong and confident Faith*, they might ſecure to themſelves the *Salvation* which he has purchaſed for his Followers. But though very great things are indeed ſpoken concerning *Faith* in Scripture, as *That* by which we are *ſaved*; yet theſe perſons do not conſider, that all the commendations There given to *Faith*, are conſtantly of the ſame kind with that given to a *Root* or *Tree*, which beareth excellent *Fruit*. The *Root*, or *Tree*, is excellent; *becauſe* it brings forth good *Fruit*, and *becauſe* the *Fruit* cannot be brought forth *without it*: But it is valuable for *no other* reaſon, but for bringing forth ſuch *Fruit*; and whenever it fails of ſo doing, it is of *no value* at all. Moſt properly and juſtly therefore, does our Saviour direct us to judge of a *Tree by its Fruit*: And *Bleſſed* does the Text pronounce, not Them who *fancy* they have a *ſtrong Faith* in him, but Them *who* Do *his Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life.*

5thly; Others depend that they ſhall be ſaved, by relying *on the* Merits *of Chriſt*, inſtead of *obeying his Laws*. Not conſidering, that the Merits of Chriſt were never intended to *ſupply Their* Want *of Repentance and Amendment*, but to *render their Repentance* acceptable *unto Pardon*. And ſo far was our Lord from ever giving encouragement to any ſuch Notion as This, of wicked mens obtaining Salvation by relying on *His* Merits, without amending their *own* lives, that on the contrary he expreſsly and with great earneſtneſs warns his Diſciples, that, not by vainly and careleſsly *relying upon* Him, were they to expect Salvation, but by *Doing*, (as He had taught them) *the Will of his Father which is in Heaven*. Far from encouraging them to rely upon his *Merits*, without their Own *Amendment*; he, by a moſt remarkable carefulneſs of expreſſion, inſiſts not even upon their Doing His Own *Will*, but the *Will of his* Father *which ſent him*; John vi. 38. And in the words of the Text, which our Lord himſelf ſpeaks in his *Own perſon*, [he does not ſay,] *Bleſſed are they which Do* [Mine, but] His, (that is, my Father's) *Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life.*

6thly, and *laſtly*, To draw towards a concluſion: *Others* there are, who expect to obtain Salvation, by their zealous Adherence to ſome particular *Sect* or *Party*, to ſome peculiar *Body* or *Denomination* of Chriſtians, to certain particular Setts or Syſtems of Opinions of which they underſtand little or nothing. And This is perhaps of All Others the moſt *common*, though at the ſame time the moſt *ſenſeleſs* of All Deceits. For what can be more abſurd, what can be more deſtructive of all true ſenſe of religion, than to imagine that men ſhould be carried to Heaven in *Bodies politick*; or that *Names*, and *Parties*, and *Factions*, (prevailing variouſly, according to the different Humours or different Succeſſes of certain Worldly Powers,) ſhould entitle men to Any ſhare in *That Bleſſedneſs*, which (at That Great Day, when God ſhall judge the World in righteouſneſs by Jeſus Chriſt,) ſhall ſeverally, according to the Degree and Proportion of every man's work, be aſſigned to Thoſe, and to Thoſe only, who *Do his Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life?*

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Of Suffering upon the Account of Religion.

COL. i. 24.

Who now rejoyce in my Sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his Body's sake, which is the Church.

THE Apostle in the words before my Text, according to his usual method upon frequent occasions in all his epistles, sets forth to the *Colossians* a brief Summary or Recapitulation of the Doctrine of the Gospel of Christ. Ver. 19; *It pleased the Father*, says he, *that in Him should all fulness dwell: And, having made peace through the Blood of his Cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto himself, whether they be things in Earth, or things in Heaven.* This Doctrine of the Gospel *in general*, he applies, (ver. 21,) to the *Colossians* in *particular*: *And You that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet Now hath he reconciled, In the body of his flesh through Death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreprovable in his sight.* Nevertheless, the *Effect* of This reconciliation

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tion depends, he tells them, upon *their own* Perſeverance in virtuous Living, in Obedience to the Doctrine they had been taught: Ver. 23; *If ye* continue *in the Faith, grounded and ſettled, and be not moved away from the Hope of the Goſpel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a Miniſter.* And then, in order to *encourage* and *ſupport* them in *thus perſevering*, he proceeds in the words of the Text, to aſſure them of his *own readineſs* to partake *with* them and *for* them, of *Any Sufferings* or *Afflictions* whatſoever, which might befal them upon account of their Adherence to Truth and Virtue. *Who now rejoice in my Sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the Afflictions of Chriſt in my fleſh, for his body's ſake, which is the Church.*

In diſcourſing upon Theſe words, I ſhall *Firſt* conſider what is *ſuppoſed* in the words, that *Chriſt himſelf* was to *ſuffer*; and that his *Diſciples* afterwards, according to the good pleaſure and appointment of God, muſt *generally*, after the Lord's *example*, expect many kinds of *Sufferings and Afflictions* likewiſe. And Then I ſhall proceed to explain *what* it is that St *Paul* meant, when he ſaid concerning his *own* Sufferings *in particular*; *I rejoice in my Sufferings* for you, *and fill up that which is behind of the Afflictions of Chriſt in my fleſh, for his body's ſake, which is the Church.*

I. *Firſt*; It is *ſuppoſed* in the words, that *Chriſt himſelf* was to *ſuffer*. God, the Supreme Author and Governour of all things, has *numberleſs Creatures* conſtantly obeying his Will; even *thoſe Servants of His, who* in Heaven continually *do his Pleaſure*. And to Theſe, in proportion to their ſeveral Capacities, he communicates unſpeakable degrees of Happineſs. He *has no need* therefore *of the ſinful man*; nor *any obligation upon him* to deliver Apoſtate Creatures from That *Death* which by the nature of Things, and by the Appointment of God, is the proper *Wages of Sin*. Nevertheleſs, being eſſentially Good and Merciful he reſolved to have Pity upon all ſuch Sinners, as ſhould by true Repentance and real Amendment of Manners become Objects of Compaſſion. And at the ſame time, that the Honour, and Dignity; and Authority of his Laws might in a conſiſtent manner be vindicated againſt Sin, he was pleaſed to appoint ſo *great* an *expiation*, as the voluntary *Sufferings* and *Death* of his Son. This Appointment therefore was *foreſignified* from the Beginning of the World, by the typical *Sacrifices* of Beaſts: And it was *more clearly* predicted all along by the "Prophets; the Spirit of Chriſt, which was in them, *conſtantly* teſtifying before-"hand the Sufferings of Chriſt, and the Glory that ſhould follow." In order to accompliſh theſe predictions; he who, in his *original* ſtate, was not *capable* of ſuffering, did in the Fulneſs of time condeſcend to aſſume our nature, and become *Man*; that he might *make his Soul an Offering for Sin*, and that *on Him* might be *laid the Iniquities of us all*. And the *firſt part* of his *Sufferings*, was *this very Humiliation*, even his *Incarnation itſelf*; his *laying aſide* the *Glory which he had with God before the World was*, and being *made in the likeneſs of* Sinful *man*. Then, *in* That *Form of a Servant*, during the whole courſe of his Life, beſides the *general* Wants and Infirmities of Humane Nature, he was in a *particular* manner poor and afflicted, and for the moſt part *had not where to lay his head*. He all along bore the *contradiction* of *Sinners*, and the *Weakneſſes* of his own *Diſciples*. He *went about, doing good* to *Others*; but was perpetually deſpiſed and affronted *Himſelf*. And at laſt, was *betrayed* by *One* of his Diſciples, and forſaken by *all the reſt*; was *accuſed* by the *Jews*, as a *Rebel* againſt the *Emperour*, and a *Blaſphemer* againſt *God*; was abuſed by the *Roman Soldiers*, buffeted, ſcourged, crowned with Thorns, ſpit upon, and mocked; and, after all This, was put to a *cruel and ignominious Death*. This was the Accompliſhment of the *Prophecies* that went before concerning him; and of That Great *Counſel and Appointment of God*, which thoſe Prophecies did by degrees reveal and open, that he ſhould be made a *Sacrifice* and *Expiation* for Sin. For ſince God, in the Wiſdom of his Government, and in Vindication of his righteous Laws, had thought fit to appoint, that *without ſhedding of Blood* there ſhould be *no Remiſſion*, and the *Wages of Sin* was *Death*; it was *neceſſary*, (whether

(whether *abſolutely in the nature of things*, or not, it becomes not *Us* to preſume to judge; but, in the *Appointment of God*, *neceſſary* it was) that he who was to redeem Tranſgreſſors from *Death*, muſt, to accompliſh That Redemption, *die himſelf*. SERM. LI.

When therefore pious and devotional Writers repreſent, as in the Church of *Rome* they frequently do; when they repreſent *one drop of this Blood of Chriſt* to be of ſufficient value to redeem the whole World; from whence it might ſeem as if there was *No neceſſity* abſolutely, that he ſhould *at all* have *Died*: It is to be obſerved, in Anſwer to This, that, in the *ſtrict* and *proper* ſenſe, not the *Blood*, but the *Death* of Chriſt, is the Expiation for Sin; and that therefore, when we are declared in Scripture to be redeemed by his *Blood*, it is only a figurative expreſſion for being redeemed by his *Death*. From whence, by the way, clearly appears the extreme Folly of the Church of *Rome*; Who, if they had in their Poſſeſſion *literally and truly*, as they moſt *vainly pretend*, ſome of the *Real* material *Blood*, not of *Saints only* and of *Martyrs*, but even of *Chriſt* himſelf; yet there would not therefrom ariſe *any Benefit* at all, or any *Indulgence to Sin*.

If it be here further inquired, how *That Forgiveneſs* of Sin is *Free*, or of *mere Grace and Favour*, as the Scripture every-where repreſents it; which yet God did not think fit to grant without ſo great a *Satisfaction*, as the Redemption purchaſed by the *Death of Chriſt*: The Anſwer is plain; That it was no leſs truly and properly a *Free Gift* of God, to *appoint* and to *accept* That Satisfaction; than it would have been to have granted Remiſſion, if he had ſo pleaſed, without Any Interceſſion or Satisfaction at all. For He who *Freely*, and without *Any Obligation* or *Conſtraint*, grants and appoints the *Means*; muſt be acknowledged to have as *Freely* granted the *End*, as if he had thought fit to grant it in any *Other* way or method whatſoever.

This therefore is the *firſt* Particular, remarkable in the Text: It is *Suppoſed* in the words, that *Chriſt himſelf* was to *Suffer*.

II. *Secondly*; It is *Suppoſed further* in the words of the Text, that Chriſt's *Diſciples* afterwards, according to the good pleaſure and appointment of God, muſt *generally*, after the Lord's Example, expect many kinds of *Sufferings and Afflictions* likewiſe. "I now (*ſaith the Apoſtle*) rejoice in my Sufferings, and "fill up that which is behind of the Afflictions of Chriſt in my Fleſh." We know by Experience; and God, who is greater than All, and ſeeth what is in man, knoweth more perfectly; how exceedingly apt *Temporal Proſperity* is, to corrupt the Minds and Manners of Men. Inſomuch that our Saviour declares, "*that* 'tis eaſier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a "Rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God:" Meaning, not that it is *impoſſible*; but that, *comparatively* ſpeaking, it is very *difficult*, for thoſe who are continually ſurrounded with the Pleaſures, and Grandeur, and Temptations of this preſent World, to preſerve *that habitually virtuous* diſpoſition of mind, which is neceſſary to qualify men for the Life to come. The Deceitfulneſs of *Riches*, blinds mens eyes; The *Pleaſures* of Life, ſteal from them their Underſtandings; *Power*, is very apt to lead them into Ambition and Tyrannicalneſs; *Plenty*, into Intemperance; And *continued Proſperity*, into a careleſs Spirit, and into a Neglect and Forgetfulneſs of God. On the contrary, *Afflictions* of all kinds, though for the preſent they cannot but be grievous, yet they have naturally a Tendency in the end to "yield the peaceable fruit of Righ-"teouſneſs, unto them that are exerciſed thereby;" Heb. xii. 11. They are naturally apt, to lead men into ſober Thoughts, and conſiderate Counſels; to wean them from the numerous Vanities and Follies of the World; and to amend the Habit and Temper of their Minds, by addicting them to the expectation of a better and more laſting State. For *Theſe*, and perhaps for *Other* more Secret Reaſons, which We at preſent may not be able to judge of; but which will then moſt fully and clearly appear, when God *ſhall* finally "come to be "glorified in his Saints, and to be admired in all them that believe; *when* all "mouths ſhall be ſtopped before him, *and he ſhall be* juſtified in his Saying,

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" *and he* clear when he is judged: " For *Theſe*, I ſay, and perhaps for *Other* more Secret Reaſons which ſhall *finally* appear, it has pleaſed God *much more generally* to try his Beſt Servants with various *Afflictions* and *Sufferings*, than with *Temporal Proſperity*. By the Wiſeſt and moſt Rational men even in the *Heathen World*, was this Conduct of Providence obſerved; and it was very reaſonably applied by them as a ſtrong Argument, to convince themſelves of the Certainty of a Future Life. The *Patriarchs* of old, had ſtill *greater Experience* of This Truth: Who (as it is moſt affectionately repreſented in the xith to the *Hebrews*,) " confeſſed that they were Strangers and Pilgrims on the " Earth, declaring plainly that they ſought a better country: Chooſing rather " to ſuffer Affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the Pleaſures of " Sin for a Seaſon: *For they* endured, as ſeeing Him who is Inviſible; *and frequently* were tortured, not accepting Deliverance that they might obtain a " Better Reſurrection. " In after-times, when the people of *Iſrael* were eſtabliſhed in the Poſſeſſion of the *Promiſed Land*, ſtill Providence was pleaſed to permit, that over Ten of the twelve Tribes of *Iſrael*, from *Jeroboam* their *firſt* Ruler until their *Final* Captivity, there reigned *not One King* who was not an *Idolater*; Inſomuch that the only Account we have of the True Worſhippers of God in That whole period of time, is what the Spirit declared to *Elijah*, " Yet have I left me ſeven thouſand in Iſrael, that have not bowed the knee " to Baal. " And the *Prophecy* concerning the *Reſtoration* of *Iſrael*, Dan. xii. 1; is ſtill in the ſame ſtyle; " There ſhall be a time of Trouble, ſuch as Never " was ſince there was a Nation; and at that Time ſhall thy people be deliver- " ed. " In like manner, when we come to the Times of the *Goſpel*; we find, that as it pleaſed *Him*, " for whom are all things, in bringing many Sons unto " glory, to make the *Captain* of our Salvation perfect through Sufferings, *Heb.* " ii. 10: *So our* Lord *continually warns his* Diſciples *to expect the ſame, foraſmuch* " *as* the Diſciple is not above his Maſter, nor He that is ſent, greater than He " that Sent him. " And particularly in his *Prophecy* concerning the *latter Ages* of the World, he foretels that *Days* ſhould come, which *unleſs they were ſhortened, no Fleſh ſhould be ſaved*; that is, the True Religion would be extinguiſhed upon Earth. And accordingly *the Apoſtles*, in all *Their* Writings, are perpetually aſſuring us, " *that* we muſt thro' much tribulation enter into the King- " dom of God; *That*, if in This life only we had Hope, Chriſtians are of all " men the moſt miſerable: *That*, whom the Lord loveth, he chaſteneth, and " ſcourgeth every Son whom he receiveth; *That Chriſtians ought not there-* " *fore to* think it ſtrange concerning the fiery Tryal that is *at any time* to try " them; *But ought rather* to rejoice, though now for a ſeaſon they are in Hea- " vineſs through manifold Temptations; that the Tryal of their Faith, being " much more precious than of Gold that periſheth, though it be tried with Fire, " might be found unto Praiſe and Honour and Glory at the appearing of Jeſus " Chriſt.

It may here naturally be thought, and not altogether without Reaſon, that the *greateſt part* of theſe Paſſages have reference *peculiarly* to thoſe *Times of Perſecution*, wherein the *Apoſtles themſelves* and their *immediate Followers* preached the Goſpel. But though This *is* in great meaſure *True*; yet it is alſo to be remembred, that both our *Saviour himſelf*, as I before obſerved, and *the Apoſtles* likewiſe, do expreſsly declare, that in the *Laſt*, as well as in the *Firſt* days, *perilous times ſhould come*. St. *Paul* ſpeaking of the Great Hindrances to the ſpreading of the Goſpel from the *Oppoſition* and *Perſecutions* of both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, foretels, that when *He who Now letteth, ſhall be taken out of the way*, 2 Th. ii. 7; he foretels that *Then*, not (as might naturally have been expected) True Religion ſhould proſper and flouriſh in the World, " *but* on the " contrary *Then* ſhall That wicked one be revealed, That man of Sin, " the Son of perdition, ſitting in the Temple of God, whom the Lord ſhall " conſume with the Spirit of his mouth, and ſhall deſtroy with the brightneſs of " his Coming. " And St. *John* in his *Revelation*, having deſcribed *a great multitude*

titude which no man could number, of all Nations and Kindreds and People and Tongues, giving Glory to God; was ſhown that *Theſe are They which came out of Great Tribulation*, ch. vii. 14; in the original it is, out of the *Great Tribulation*; *meaning the times of Apoſtacy, and great Corruption* in the Body of the *Chriſtian* Church itſelf. And even in *ſuch* times, wherein (according to the *vulgar* ſenſe of That Word) there is *no* direct *perſecution*, either from open Infidels or from Corrupt Profeſſors; yet even *Then*, even in *all* times, ſaith St. *Paul*, *all* good Chriſtians, *yea*, *All that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus*, ſhall *ſuffer Perſecution*; ſhall, in ſome manner or other, upon Account of their adhering to Truth and Virtue be ill-treated in an unrighteous and debauched World.

All which, abundantly makes good This *Second* Obſervation drawn from the Words of my Text; that as *Chriſt himſelf*, according to the Predictions that went before concerning him, *was* to *ſuffer*; ſo his *Diſciples* afterwards, according to the good pleaſure and appointment of God, muſt *generally*, after their Lord's *example*, expect many kinds of *Sufferings and Afflictions* likewiſe. Upon which Account St. *Paul* profeſſes, *Phil.* iii. 8; "I have ſuffered the loſs of all "things, and do count them but dung,——That I may know Him, and the "Power of his Reſurrection, and the Fellowſhip of his Sufferings, being made "conformable unto his Death; If by any means I might attain unto the Re"ſurrection of the Dead." It remains that I proceed Now in the

III. *Third* place, to explain *what* it is that the Apoſtle meant, when he ſaid in the Words of the *Text*, concerning his *Own* Sufferings *in particular*; "I re"joice in my Sufferings *for you*, and fill up that which is behind of the Afflic"tions of Chriſt in my Fleſh, for his Body's ſake, which is the Church." And here it is evident the Apoſtle, by his *ſuffering* for *the Church*, and *filling up that which is behind of the Afflictions of Chriſt*, had *no Thought* of what has in later Ages been pretended by the Church of *Rome*; that the *Afflictions* and *Good-Works* of the *Saints* are *meritorious*, to purchaſe Remiſſion of Sin, not only *for themſelves*, but for *Others* alſo; in *ſome proportion*, as the *Sufferings* of *Chriſt* were for the Redemption of the *Whole Church*. This, I ſay, the Apoſtle never had the leaſt Thought of. But his plain and full Meaning is *This* only; that, *as* it was foretold and appointed that *Chriſt*, the *Head* of the Church, ſhould *firſt* ſuffer; ſo it was appointed that his *Body* alſo, the *Members* of his Church, ſhould in many reſpects (generally ſpeaking) ſuffer *after* him, being *conformed* to *the Image of the Son* of God. This is, *filling up that which is behind of the Afflictions of Chriſt*; accompliſhing that which remained to be fulfilled, of the Sufferings, *firſt* of *Chriſt*, and *then* of his *Church*. And the *Reaſon why*, in repreſenting to the *Coloſſians* his *Own* Sufferings, he ſtiles them *my Sufferings* for You, and for *Chriſt's Body's* ſake, *which is the Church*; is, *becauſe* the Sufferings he underwent, were brought upon him by his Zeal in inſtructing and confirming *Them* in the Doctrine of the Goſpel; and *becauſe* his Sufferings were an Example and an Encouragement to *Them*, to ſuffer likewiſe patiently for their Adherence to the Truth. The *ſame* manner of Expreſſion therefore, he uſes upon the like Occaſion, in *Other alſo* of his Epiſtles. Thus 2 Cor. i. 5; "As "the Sufferings of *Chriſt*, (*ſays he*) abound in *Us*, ſo——*when We* be afflicted, "it is for *your* conſolation and ſalvation, which is effectual in the enduring of "the *ſame* Sufferings which *We* alſo ſuffer, *ch.* iv. 8, 9, 11, 15, 16; We are "troubled on every ſide,——perſecuted,——alway delivered unto Death for "Jeſus ſake;——for all things are for *your* ſakes, that the abundant grace might, "through the Thankſgiving of Many, redound to the Glory of God: For "which cauſe we faint not." So in his Epiſtle to the *Epheſians*, ch. iii. ver. 1. 13; "I Paul (*ſays he*) the Priſoner of Jeſus Chriſt, *for You* Gentiles,—— "deſire that ye faint not at my Tribulations *for You*, which is your Glory. "*Again*, Phil. ii. 17; Yea, and if I be offered (*ſays he*) upon the Sacrifice and "Service of *your Faith*, I joy and rejoice with you all. *And* 2 Tim. ii. 9; I ſuffer "Trouble (*ſays he*) as an Evil-doer, even unto Bonds; but the Word of God "is not Bound: Therefore I endure all things *for the Elects ſake*, that *They* "may alſo obtain the Salvation which is in Chriſt Jeſus, with eternal Glory.

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The proper *Inferences* from what has been ſaid, are:

1*ſt*, If God, in the infinite Wiſdom of his Government over the Univerſe, ſaw fit to permit, that *our Saviour himſelf*, and *his Apoſtles after him*, ſhould ſuffer in this manner; how much more ought *We*, with *Patience* and even with *Thankſulneſs*, to ſubmit to whatever Afflictions his Divine Providence ſhall at any time permit to fall upon us for Truth and Righteouſneſs ſake; or ſhall upon Any Account, judge needful for us, in our Paſſage through a ſinful and corrupt World; that we may at laſt ſafely arrive at the Regions of eternal Security, and eſcape his final and everlaſting Wrath. "For if theſe things be "done in the Green tree, what ſhall be done in the Dry? *And* if the Righ- "teous ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear?

2*dly*, From what has been ſaid in Explication of St. *Paul's* particular manner of expreſſing himſelf in the *Text*, we may infer, that, if not in *This place*, much leſs in *any other* part of Scripture, is there any Ground or Foundation for ſetting up any *Other Mediator* beſides Chriſt alone; or for imagining that *Any Other Perſon* whatſoever, can be capable of *Doing*, or *Suffering*, or *Interceeding* any way *meritoriouſly* for us. The *Apoſtles themſelves*, never either *claimed* or *thought of* any ſuch thing. The earthly *Relations*, and even the *Mother of our Lord*, the *Bleſſed Virgin* herſelf, were in the whole Hiſtory of the Goſpel conſtantly treated by him after ſuch a manner, as if it were *on purpoſe* to guard againſt thoſe groſs Superſtitions, which our Lord foreſaw would prevail in the latter Ages of the World. Matt. xii. 48; "Who is my Mother, and who are "my Brethren? And ſtretching forth his hands towards his Diſciples, he ſaid; "Behold my Mother, and my Brethren: For whoſoever will do the Will of "my Father which is in Heaven, the ſame is my Brother, and Siſter, and Mo- "ther." Thoſe of the Church of *Rome* therefore, *intruding into things which they have not ſeen*, and with a *voluntary Humility* ſetting up *Other Mediators* in the place of Chriſt, who is *Alone* appointed of God to That Office, do really in effect *deny* both *the Lord who bought them* with the precious Blood of his Dear Son, and alſo *our Saviour himſelf* by the purchaſe of whoſe Blood they were *redeemed to God*. And let not *Proteſtants* value themſelves upon their ſtanding clear of *This* particular Corruption. For as the *imaginary* Interceſſion of Angels and Saints, and of the Bleſſed Virgin, will be of No Service to their *Superſtitious Votaries*; ſo to *Any wicked* man, to any *debauched*, *unrighteous*, or *profane* Perſon, in *Any Profeſſion* of Religion whatſoever, the *Real Mediation of Chriſt himſelf* will be of no *Avail*. For, *not every one that ſaith unto Me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that Doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.*

SERMON

SERMON LII.

Of the Nature of the Sufferings of Chriſt.

1 PET. iii. 18.

For Chriſt alſo hath once ſuffered for Sins, the juſt for the unjuſt, that he might bring us to God.

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THE Deſign of the Apoſtle in theſe Words, is to exhort Chriſtians to ſuffer Perſecution chearfully for the ſake of a good Conſcience, from the Example of the Sufferings of our Saviour Chriſt: "If "ye ſuffer for *righteouſneſs* ſake, happy are ye, *ver.* 14; *And ver.* "17; It is better, if the will of God be ſo, that ye ſuffer for *well-* "doing than for *evil*-doing; For *Chriſt* alſo hath once ſuffered for ſins, the juſt "for the unjuſt, that he might bring us to God." But I ſhall not at this time conſider the Words under this particular reſpect, with relation to the Context; but ſhall treat of them abſolutely and in general, as a brief and ſummary account of the Work of our Redemption, and of the Deſign of our Saviour's Sufferings; "Chriſt has once ſuffered for ſins, the juſt for the unjuſt, that he "might bring us unto God.

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In which Assertion of the Apostle, there are plainly contained these three things; 1*st*, A *Supposition* of mens being unjust or unrighteous, and consequently of their being alienated from the favour of God; 2*dly*, An *Assertion*, of Christ's having suffered for the sins of those, who were thus alienated from the Favour of God; And 3*dly*, An account of the *Effects* of those Sufferings; *that he might bring men to God*, or restore them to his Favour.

The *Estate* wherein the Apostle supposes men to have been, antecedent to their Redemption by Christ, is a State of Sin and Enmity against God. Rom. v. 8; "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were *yet sinners*, Christ died for us: *and ver.* 10; When we were *enemies*, we were "reconciled to God, by the death of his Son." Now This is most *eminently* and remarkably true, of those *Heathens*, who at the first preaching of the Gospel, were converted to the Faith; and, by being baptized in the Name, and into the Religion of Christ, were made Partakers of the benefits of his Death and Passion. They had been formerly, in the most *proper* Sense, Enemies of God and of his holy Religion; being altogether in a state of idolatry and unrighteousness, and liable to the Wrath of God. *Ephes.* ii. 1, 2, 3; "Ye were "*dead* in trespasses and sins; Wherein in times past ye walked according to "the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; Among whom "also *we all* had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath;" *by nature*, that is, not as we were born, or created by God; but, in that state of ignorance, corruption and wickedness, wherein *you* Gentiles were, before your conversion to Christianity. That This is the true Meaning of the Phrase, appears plainly from the 11th Verse, where the Apostle bids them remember, "that being in time past *Gentiles* in the flesh, they were at *that* time "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers "from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the "World." This (I say) is most *eminently* true, of those who were converted from *Heathenism* to Christianity; But it is true also in great measure of the greatest part of *Christians*; who through the Unhappiness of a bad Education, or the prevailing Temptations of Sin, have been engaged in any vicious course, before their conversion to a life of holiness; by which they first begin to be reconciled to God, and to be entitled to the benefits of the Sufferings of Christ. Nay even they who have been so happy, as by a good Education, and an early Sense of Religion, to have escaped the great Pollutions that are in the World through Sin; yet even These have not conquered the Corruption of their Nature and their too great Propensions to Sin, but with reluctance and by *degrees*, before they could arrive to such a fixt and steddy course of Piety, as is not to be obtained but by great Consideration, and a perfect Knowledge of the Religion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The *estate* therefore, wherein the Apostle supposes men to be antecedent to their redemption by Christ, is a state of sin and enmity against God. The *Means* by which we are delivered from this evil state, he tells us are *the sufferings of Christ*; Christ *has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust*. By which words nothing less *can* be meant, than that the Son of God, in order to the effectual expiation of Sin, suffered in the sinner's *stead*; and, by bearing the Wrath of God for us, made a perfect *atonement* for the Sins of all True Penitents. For so the Scripture most expressly declares in many parallel places; as where Christ is affirmed *to have redeemed us by his blood*; to have *born our sins in his own body on the tree*; to have *given himself a sacrifice for us*, and a *propitiation for the sins of the whole world*. The Meaning of all which can be nothing less than This; that when men had by Sin put themselves in a state of wrath, and out of the favour of God; our Saviour by taking upon himself the Punishment of Death, due to their Sins, and by suffering in their stead, and thereby establishing a Covenant for the accepting of Repentance, delivered them out of that miserable and lost Condition. Wherefore the Death of Christ was truly and properly an expiatory Sacrifice, and in the fullest Sense a perfect and

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ſufficient Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole world: Satisfaction; not as an *equivalent, without which* God *could not, and with which* he *could not but* pardon Sin; (for the Scripture no where ſpeaks of Satisfaction in *That Senſe*, as ſome have erroneouſly conceived;) but as an *atonement* which the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God was pleaſed freely to appoint and freely to accept, as ſupreme Governour of the Univerſe.

Laſtly; The *deſign* and *effect* of this Redemption, the Apoſtle briefly intimates to us in *Theſe* words, *that he might bring us to God*, i. e. that having by his ſufferings made an Atonement for our Sins to the Divine Juſtice and Wiſdom, he might reſtore us again to the Favour of God; and by eſtabliſhing a new and gracious Covenant upon the Merits of thoſe his Sufferings, might enable all true Penitents to continue in the Favour of God, by obeying the Conditions of that new Covenant.

The Meaning of the Apoſtle's Words being thus explained; I ſhall from hence take Occaſion, for the more clearly illuſtrating the Wiſdom, and Juſtice, and Mercy of God in finding out this method for the Redemption of mankind, endeavour briefly to prove the following particulars, *1ſt*, That it was from the beginning infinitely reaſonable, that all poſſible Honour and Obedience, ſhould at all times be paid by all Creatures, to all the Laws and Commands of God. *2dly*, That This Honour due to the Laws of God, is diminiſhed, as much as in *Us* lies, by the Sins and Impieties of *Men*. *3dly*, That it is highly reaſonable and neceſſary, after ſuch preſumptuous tranſgreſſions, that God ſhould make *ſome* proper vindication of his divine Authority. *4thly*, That the firſt and moſt obvious method of doing This, is by the puniſhment or deſtruction of the Offenders. *5thly*, But becauſe God hates not the Perſons of ſinners, and hath no pleaſure in their deſtruction, but only a juſt Zeal for the honour of his Divine and Righteous Laws, therefore when That is by any means vindicated, his Wrath is appeaſed. *Laſtly*, That our Saviour, by his Obedience and Humiliation even unto Death, *has* in the moſt glorious manner vindicated the Honour and Authority of God; and by eſtabliſhing a Covenant of Grace upon the Merits of his Sufferings and Obedience, has ſecured to all that truly repent, Pardon and Remiſſion of Sin, conſiſtent with the Honour of the Divine Laws.

I. *Firſt*; It was from the Beginning infinitely reaſonable, that all poſſible Honour and Obedience, ſhould at all times be paid by all Creatures, to all the Laws and Commands of God; as being in themſelves eternally and eſſentially reaſonable, and proceeding moreover from the Authority abſolutely ſupreme. *Honour* is a duty which in the nature of things is owing to thoſe that are in a ſuperiour relation to us; and the very notion of it implies its being due to ſuch. By how much therefore God is infinitely greater than thoſe whom we acknowledge to be our Superiours upon Earth, by ſo much ought we to have a profounder regard and veneration for *him*. He that created all things by the word of his Power, and on whom they depend perpetually for the Continuation of that Being, which they at firſt received from *him*, has unqueſtionably reaſon to demand all the Honour that is poſſible to be rendred him by his Creatures. And this is evident even from the light of nature itſelf; there being no attribute of God, from which it is not moſt obvious and neceſſary to conclude, how great an Obligation we are under, to pay him all poſſible Honour. His Goodneſs, Holineſs, Juſtice and Mercy, are the moſt proper and immediate Objects of that Love and Fear, in the Mixture of which conſiſts that due Veneration, which we call *Honouring of* God: His infinite *Power*, *Wiſdom*, and *Knowledge*, are Perfections ſo adorable in the natural Senſe and Judgment of Men; that the Conſideration of theſe Attributes has extorted the moſt profound expreſſions of reverence and devotion, even from the *heathen* Philoſophers. "*Who* would not, "(ſays one of their Writers,) fear and reverence That God, who ſees and "takes notice of all things, and has a peculiar concern for every action and "perſon in the world?" And the ſame Argument may be drawn from all the reſt likewiſe of the divine attributes. Now the only way wherein *we* can expreſs the *Honour* we have for *God*, is by honouring, *i. e.* by *obeying* his Laws.

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II. *Secondly*; This Honour due to the Laws of God, is diminiſhed, as much as in *Us* lies, by the Sins and Impietes of Men. Every Sin is a trangreſſion of the Law; and every tranſgreſſion of a Law, is a Contempt of that Authority by which the Law was given. By Sinning therefore againſt any expreſs Law, we diminiſh, as much as in *Us* lies, the honour due unto that Law; and if it be a *divine* Law, the tranſgreſſing thereof is a diſhonouring of *God*, who was the Author of it. *Thou that makeſt thy boaſt of the law*, (ſaith St. *Paul*,) *through breaking the law diſhonoureſt thou God?* Rom. ii. 23. Every Sin that a Man wilfully commits, is a Contempt of the Commandments of God, and conſequently a Contempt of God himſelf; It is ſaying, we will not have *Him* to reign over us. And herein principally conſiſts the heinous nature of Sin, that it is ſuch a deſpite and diſhonour done to the Authority of God. Hence are thoſe earneſt and effectionate Expoſtulations of the Prophets with the People of the *Jews*, for *deſpiſing* the Commandments of God, for *polluting* his holy Name, and for cauſing his great Name to be *blaſphemed* among the *Gentiles* through their Iniquities: *Ezek.* xx. 27; *In This your Fathers have blaſphemed me*, (or cauſed my Name to be blaſphemed) *in that they have committed a Treſpaſs againſt me:* And *Iſaiah* v. 24; having reckoned up ſeveral of their greateſt wickedneſſes, he adds; *Therefore as the fire devoureth the ſtubble, and the flame conſumeth the chaff, ſo their root ſhall be as rottenneſs and their bloſſom ſhall go up as duſt; becauſe they have caſt away the law of the Lord of hoſts, and deſpiſed the word of the holy one of Iſrael.* Upon This account alſo it is, that the Sin of *Apoſtacy from Chriſtianity*, is in the *New Teſtament* ſo highly aggravated by the Apoſtle, as even in a manner to queſtion the pardonableneſs of it; becauſe it is a kind of *treading under foot the Son of God, a counting the blood of the covenant, wherewith we are ſanctified, an unholy thing, and a doing deſpite unto the Spirit of grace*, Heb. x. 29; or, as it is expreſſed, ch. vi. ver. 6; it is a *crucifying to ourſelves the Son of God afreſh, and putting him to an open ſhame*; i. e. it is doing the greateſt diſhonour to the religion which our Saviour has inſtituted, and to the Laws thereof, that can poſſibly be done. It is for this reaſon likewiſe

likewiſe that St. *James* tells us, *that whoſoever ſhall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*; i. e. he as truly diminiſhes the honour of the law, and deſpiſes the Authority of the law-giver, as he that offends in more points. For ſince the ſame authority that ſaid *Do not commit adultery*, ſaid alſo *do not kill*; if a man commits no adultery, yet if he killeth, he is as truly become a tranſgreſſor of the law, and as really derogates from its authority, as if he were guilty of more tranſgreſſions. Not that he Who offends in one point, is as great a Sinner, or deſerves as ſevere puniſhment, as he that offends in more; but he as *truly* derogates from the authority of the law, and of him that gave it, tho' not in ſo *great* a *degree*. The honour therefore due to the laws of God, is diminiſhed by Sin; and by how much the more wilful and contemptuous any Sin be, by ſo much the greater is the infringement of that honour.

III. *Thirdly*; It is highly reaſonable and neceſſary, after ſuch preſumptuous tranſgreſſion, that God ſhould make ſome Vindication of his divine Authority. The ſame reaſon that there is, why honour and obedience ſhould at all be paid to the Laws of God; the ſame reaſon there is, that this honour ſhould be vindicated, after it has been diminiſhed and infringed by Sin. To imagin, that God requires Obedience to his Commandments, and yet that he will not ſupport their authority againſt the Contempt and Diſobedience of men; to ſuppoſe that God has conſtituted juſt and righteous Laws to be obeyed by his Creatures, and yet that he will not maintain that Conſtitution, by vindicating the honour of thoſe Laws whenſoever it ſhall be inſulted by any wilful tranſgreſſion; is contrary to the Wiſdom, and altogether inconſiſtent with the Government of God, and with the Nature of Government in general. For tho' it cannot indeed be denied, but that the ſupreme Lord and Governor of all things, may deal as merciſully with his Creatures, and remit as much of his Right as he pleaſes; yet this we are ſure of, that he never will ſhew himſelf *ſo* far indulgent to *preſumptuous* Tranſgreſſors, as to bring his Laws and his Authority into Contempt. And yet this *muſt* neceſſarily be the conſequence, if God ſhould ſhow no Concern for the honour of his Laws, nor give any teſtimony of his diſpleaſure againſt Sin; For how *ſmall* a part of the World could, in ſuch a caſe, from the mere Reaſonableneſs of the thing itſelf, retain upon their Minds a juſt Awe and Regard for God's Commands? Or how could Men be convinced, that the Violation of them, is in reality ſo extremely offenſive to him? If therefore the Laws of an *earthly* Government, which are perhaps only poſitive and temporary, cannot be preſumptuouſly tranſgreſſed, but the temporal Power will immediately aſſert and vindicate their Authority; how much more unreaſonable is it to ſuppoſe, that God the all-powerful Governour of the Univerſe, who in his nature is infinitely Holy, and is infinitely concerned to maintain the eternal Diſtinction of Good and Evil, and who has declared that he is infinitely tender of his honour, and that he will not be mocked; ſhould ſuffer the Violation of *his* ſupreme Laws, which are of eternal and unchangeable Obligation, without any way vindicating the Honour of them?

IV. *Fourthly*; That which ſeems the firſt and moſt obvious way of effecting This, is by the Puniſhment or Deſtruction of the Offenders. To vindicate the Honour and Authority of a Law, is to do ſomething, whereby the Example of a former Tranſgreſſion may be prevented, either from encouraging the Offender to tranſgreſs again, or from giving occaſion to *others* to venture upon the like Tranſgreſſion. Now the moſt natural and obvious way of doing this, is either by puniſhing the Offender, to deter *him* from repeating his Offence; or by deſtroying *him*, to diſcourage *others* more *effectually*, by this more ſevere and exemplary Puniſhment, from diſobeying the ſame Law. When therefore man had tranſgreſſed the Law of God by Sin, the Wiſdom of God, conſidered as Governour of the World, was obliged in Vindication of his divine Authority, to inflict a ſuitable Puniſhment upon him: And becauſe the Puniſhment naturally due, and actually threatned to Sin, was Death; therefore, unleſs ſome Means could be found out to prevent it, the inflicting of this Puniſhment muſt have been his Deſtruction. But

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V. *Fifthly*; Becauſe God hates not the Perſons of Sinners, and hath no Pleaſure in their Deſtruction, but only a juſt and neceſſary Concern for the honour of his divine and righteous Laws; therefore whenever *That* is by any Means vindicated his Wrath is appeaſed. God does not at any time puniſh for puniſhment-ſake; much leſs, like mortal men, to gratify a Paſſion, or ſatisfy his Revenge: Far be it from God to delight in any one's Miſery, or to take any Pleaſure in the Deſtruction of his Creatures: *As I live, ſaith the Lord God, I have no pleaſure in the death of the wicked*; Ezek. xxxiii. 11. The deſign of God, is to make men good and happy; and tho' the Wiſdom of his Government obliges him to vindicate the honour of his Laws by the Puniſhment of Offenders, yet it is not without great Compaſſion and Regret, that he ſets about This which the Scripture calls his *ſtrange* work. *How ſhall I give thee up, Ephraim? how ſhall I deliver thee, O Iſrael? how ſhall I make thee as Admah! how ſhall I ſet thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together*; Hoſea xi. 8. It is *Sin* only, that God hates; and when, becauſe of *it*, he is forced to inflict any ſevere Puniſhments upon his Creatures, the Scripture always repreſents him doing it with greater Reluctancy, than the moſt merciful Prince or tender Father upon Earth, puniſhes the Diſobedience of his moſt beloved Subject or Child. Nay, if it be any way poſſible to maintain the Authority of his Government, and vindicate the honour of his Laws, without Puniſhment; he never inflicts it. And this brings me to the

Laſt Propoſition I offered, which concludes this Subject; namely, that our Saviour by obeying and ſuffering, and that to death, *on* our behalf and *in* our ſtead, has actually vindicated in the moſt glorious manner, the Honour and Authority of God; and by eſtabliſhing a Covenant of Grace, upon the Merits of his Sufferings and Obedience, has ſecured to all that truly repent and amend, Pardon and Remiſſion of Sin, conſiſtent with the Honour of the divine Laws. This is that wonderful Compoſition of Juſtice and Mercy, which Men and Angels muſt for ever adore, but can never ſufficiently praiſe and celebrate: In This Diſpenſation Mercy and Truth are met together, Righteouſneſs and Peace have kiſſed each other. The *Juſtice*, or at leaſt the *Wiſdom* of God required, that when Man had ſinned, the Sacredneſs and Authority of the divine Laws ſhould be vindicated by a condign Puniſhment; and our Saviour, (a perſon of inconceivable Dignity and Merit,) by ſuffering *on* our behalf and *in* our ſtead, has effectually vindicated that Authority. The *Mercy* and *Goodneſs* of God required, that thoſe who truly repented and amended, ſhould obtain pardon and remiſſion of their Sins; And our Saviour, by eſtabliſhing a new Covenant, upon the Merits of his Sufferings and Obedience, has ſecured this Grace to us, conſiſtent with the honour of the divine Laws. Had God out of his infinite Grace and Goodneſs, freely vouchſafed a Pardon to all paſt Sins, without exacting any Satisfaction at all, or by accepting of ſuch infinitely inſufficient Satisfaction, as ſinful man could have been capable of making; we muſt indeed have admired the exceeding abundance of his *Mercy*; but his *Severity* and infinite *Hatred* againſt Sin, would not ſo clearly have been diſplayed. But now, when at the ſame time that he is pardoning the *Sinner*, he inflicts the heavieſt Puniſhment of *Sin*, upon the beſt and moſt innocent Perſon that ever lived in the World, voluntarily chooſing to undergo theſe Sufferings for us; this is an abundant proof what a high and tender Concern God has for the Honour of his juſt and righteous Commandments; and of what unſpeakable ill Conſequence Sin is. The lively Deſcriptions that the Scriptures give us of our Saviour's Sufferings, both in the Prophets Predictions of his Paſſion, and in the Evangeliſts accounts of its Accompliſhment, are convincing Demonſtrations of God's irreconcileable Hatred againſt Sin, and how very conſiſtently with the ſacred and unalterable Authority of his Laws it is, that he has granted Pardon to true Repentance. The liii*d* Chapter of *Iſaiah*, is a Prophecy of our Saviour's Paſſion long before it came to paſs, as moving and affectionate, as any Deſcription of a thing then actually preſent, could have been. *He is deſpiſed and rejected of men; a man of ſorrows and acquainted with grief; ſurely he hath born*

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our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted; But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed; All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all; He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth; ver. 3 to the *7th*. And the accounts the Evangelists gives us of the *accomplishment* of this Prophecy, are such as ought in all reason to raise in the most obdurate Heart an eternal Hatred of those Sins, which were the cause of such Sufferings falling upon the most innocent person that ever lived; and to fill our Breasts with the most ardent Love and Thankfulness, to *God* who *gave*, and to our *Saviour* who was contented *to be given* a ransom for our sakes.

And now, having given you a brief account of the Reason and Method of our Redemption by Christ, in these particulars, namely; *1st*; That it was from the beginning infinitely reasonable, that all possible Honour and Obedience should at all times be paid by all Creatures to all the Laws and Commands of God. *2dly*, That this Honour due to the Laws of God, is diminished, as much as in *Us* lies, by the Sins and Impieties of men. *3dly*, That in the nature of Government it is highly reasonable and necessary, after such presumptuous Transgression, that God should make *some* vindication of his divine Authority. *4thly*, That the first and most obvious Method of doing This, is by the Punishment or Destruction of the Offenders. *5thly*, But because God hates not the Persons of Sinners, and hath no pleasure in their Destruction, but only a just Zeal for the Honour of his divine and righteous Laws; therefore whenever That is by any means vindicated, his Wrath is appeased. *Lastly*, Our Saviour, by obeying, and that to Death, *on* our behalf, and *in* our stead, *has* in the most glorious manner vindicated the Honour and Authority of God; and by establishing a Covenant of Grace and Mercy upon the Merits of his Sufferings and Obedience, has secured to All that truly repent and amend, Pardon and Remission of Sin, consistent with the honour of the divine Laws.

It remains that I draw two or three useful and practical Inferences from what has been said, and so conclude. And

First, From the Doctrines therein explained, we may learn the true nature of Christ's Satisfaction; namely, that his Death was *truly* and *properly*, in the strictest Meaning of the Word, an expiatory Sacrifice. For if Sinners by having diminished the Honour and despised the Authority of God's Laws, were become liable to the Justice and Vengeance of God; If the Son of God in our nature, by vindicating the Honour of God's Laws, hath discharged this Obligation, and obtained Remission for us; And if the obtaining this Remission was by the shedding of his Blood, which is called the *price of our Redemption*, 1 Cor. vi. 20; it follows, that the Wrath of God was appeased by the Death of Christ, and that God was graciously pleased to accept this vicarious Suffering of his Son, in the *stead* of the Punishment that was due to the Sinner in his own Person; which is the express and most proper notion of an expiatory Sacrifice: For so we read that under the Law, the Sinner laying his hand upon the Sacrifice, to signify the transferring upon *it* the Punishment due unto himself, the Sacrifice was slain, and it was accepted for him to make an Atonement for him. Which, if it was intended for a type of Christ, (as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* largely shows, and as the whole nature of the Law abundantly declares;) nothing can be more unreasonable, that to make the Substance less real than the Shadow, to make the Death of Christ less truly expiatory, than the Sacrifices that were merely Types and representations of it. St. *Paul*'s Argument on the contrary is strong and clear: *If the blood of bulls and of goats*, saith he, *and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God*; Heb. ix. 13. Wherefore to say That Christ died for our Ad-

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vantage, but not in our ſtead; that his Death was not properly a Sacrifice for Sin, but merely a Teſtimony to his Doctrine, and an Example to encourage us to ſuffer Perſecution chearfully for the will of God; is really to diminiſh from the Grace and Mercy of God, and from that exceeding Love of our Saviour to Mankind, which the Apoſtle extols principally from this very Conſideration, that he laid down his Life *for us*, or *in* our *ſtead*; dying, not for a good man, which ſome one might even dare to do, but for thoſe who were yet Enemies and Offenders againſt God. It is true the Death of Chriſt *was* a great Teſtimony to the Truth of his Doctrine; (for *what* greater Teſtimony can be given to any Truth, than to die for it?) *'Twas* alſo an Example of exceeding great Encouragement to thoſe who ſhould follow him, to ſuffer patiently for well-doing: To which purpoſe the Apoſtle himſelf applies it even in the words of the Text; *It is better*, ſaith he, *if the Will of God be ſo, that ye ſuffer for well-doing than for evil-doing; For Chriſt alſo has once ſuffered for Sins, the juſt for the unjuſt.* But though this was indeed one part of his deſign, yet certainly the *great* and *principal* End of our Saviours dying, was that Other and Firſt Intention of it, the making an Expiation for the Sins of Mankind. This was the *main* deſign of his appearing in the fleſh; and this the Scripture every where expreſſes as *fully*, as it is poſſible almoſt to be expreſſed in words. *What the Law could not do*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *in that it was weak through the fleſh, God ſending his own Son in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh, and* for *Sin* (or as the words may more properly be rendred, by being *a ſacrifice* for Sin,) *condemned Sin in the fleſh*; Rom. viii. 3. Hence our Saviour is affirmed to *have obtained redemption for us*, Heb. ix. 12: to *have put away Sin by the ſacrifice of himſelf.* Heb. ix. 26: to *have purchaſed a Church with his blood.* Acts xx. 28; to *be the propitiation for our ſins*, 1 John ii. 2; and to *have given his life a ranſom for many.* St. Matt. xx. 28; for *many*; that is, for *ſo* many as ſhould believe and obey him; as it is explained by St. *Paul*, 1 Tim. ii. 6; and Heb. ix. 28: In one of which places he ſays *Chriſt ſuffered to bear the Sins of* Many; in the other Chapter, that *he gave himſelf a ranſom for All.* By comparing which places of Scripture one with another, it appears, that there is no ground at all for that vain Imagination which ſome have entertained, as if Chriſt died only for a certain determinate number of particular Perſons: On the contrary it is evident, that what is affirmed in ſome places concerning Chriſt's having died for *many*, is of the very ſame import with what is affirmed in others, concerning his having died for *All.* For where it is ſaid he died for *All*; it is plain the Meaning is, for all *ſuch only*, as ſhould believe and obey; and where it is ſaid he died for *many*, it is evident the Meaning is, for *ſo many* as ſhould likewiſe believe and obey: Which is in other Words the very ſame thing. When St. *Paul* affirms that *God would have* All *men to be ſaved and to come to the knowledge of the Truth*; and that *Chriſt gave himſelf a ranſom for* All: and St. *Peter*; that God *would not that* any *ſhould periſh, but that* All *ſhould come to repentance*; the Words themſelves, and the whole Tenour of Scripture do ſufficiently intimate, that Chriſt's giving himſelf a ranſom for *All*, is for All *ſuch only*, as come to Repentance by receiving the knowledge of the Truth. And on the contrary when our Saviour tells us, that *the Son of man came to give his life a ranſom for* Many; and *that this is my blood of the New Teſtament, which is ſhed for* Many *for the remiſſion of Sins*; and St. *Paul*, that *Chriſt ſuffered to bear the Sins of* Many: The whole Tenour of the ſame Scripture ſufficiently declares, that by *Many* is *there* likewiſe meant All *ſuch*, as ſhould come to Repentance by receiving the knowledge of the Truth: Which is the very ſame in ſenſe, with what is in other Words affirmed in the former Texts.

As to the *Juſtice* of God's laying the Puniſhment of Sinners upon an innocent Perſon, and of forgiving one Perſon's Sin upon account of the Merits of another Perſon; which ſome have pretended to think not reconcilable with Right and Equity; we have this to reply. In general; that God being the Supreme and Abſolute Lord of all things, has an abſolute and unqueſtionable Right, to remit, upon what Conditions he pleaſes, Offences committed againſt himſelf;

himself; either without requiring any Satisfaction at all, or upon whatever Satisfaction he shall think fit to appoint, in Conjunction with the sincere Repentance of the Offender, for the Vindication of the Authority of his Laws and Government. For, the Obligation to *Punishment*, is not, as in the case of *Reward*, any Right in the Person that is to *receive* it, but only a Right in the Law-giver to *inflict* it; which Right, being entirely his own, he may remit as much of it as he pleases, and upon what Terms or Conditions he thinks fit. And then in particular; as to the difficulty with regard to the *Justice*, of laying the Punishment of Sinners upon an innocent Person; this Difficulty is entirely removed by the voluntary Consent and Choice of the Person, in taking the Punishment upon himself. For though to punish an innocent Person instead of the guilty, is evidently unjust; yet to permit an innocent person to take it voluntarily upon himself, is by no means so. On the contrary it is an instance of the greatest Goodness and Mercy, to find out such an Expedient; And as the Love and Humility of Christ is inexpressibly great in condescending to assume our Nature, and submitting to an ignominious Death, *even the Death of the Cross*; so the Mercy and Goodness of God can never be worthily and sufficiently acknowledged, in accepting this Sacrifice, and *so loving the world, as to* give *his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.* SERM. LII.

Secondly; From the Doctrine already explained, we may learn the Weakness and Insufficiency of all other Propitiations and pretended Satisfactions whatsoever. When the Honour of God's Laws had been diminished by Sin; it was reasonable and necessary, (notwithstanding God's Power and absolute *Right* of Forgiving; yet in respect of his *Wisdom* in governing the World,) it was reasonable and necessary there should be a Vindication of the Authority of his Laws; and therefore it was necessary in *That* sense of Necessity, either that the Sinner should perish; or that some other satisfaction should be made in his stead. Now had God accepted any such slight Propitiation, as could have been made or invented by men; the Honour of his Laws would not have been sufficiently vindicated, nor his hatred sufficiently declared against Sin. It was necessary therefore, that Expiation should be made by *such* a Person, whose Innocence and Dignity might make his Sufferings worthy to be accepted of God in the stead of the Punishment due to Mankind; so that he might forgive the Sinner consistently with the Honour of his Laws, and with his irreconcilable Hatred against Sin. Wherefore though the best Men among the Heathens, had great and just Hopes, (made good to them by Christ, though unknown,) that upon their sincere Repentance, the merciful God and compassionate Governour of the World, *would* forgive their Sins, and graciously accept their imperfect Endeavours; yet that their sacrificing of beasts as a kind of Propitiation for them, should be of any *real* value towards the expiating of Sin, was evidently impossible. And tho' the *Jews* by God's own Appointment were to offer certain Beasts in sacrifice, and God himself was pleased to declare that he *would* accept those Offerings, so that the Blood of the Beasts *should* make Atonement for their Sins; yet neither had *these* Sacrifices any real Efficacy in themselves to expiate Sin, but only as they typified that great Sacrifice, which was once to be offered for the Sins of the whole World. *For the first tabernacle*, as the Apostle observes, *was only a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that* could not *make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience*; Heb. ix. 9: And ch. x. ver. 1. and 4; *The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very* Substance *of the things, can never with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect*; *For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away Sins.* And if this be the case of those very Propitiations, those Sacrifices which were of God's *own* immediate Appointing; that they were in themselves of no real Efficacy at all, but mere Types; how much more useless and insufficient, and consequently deceitful to the People, and destructive of Men's Souls, must be those vain Satisfactions of human Invention, those Penances and Pilgrimages, those empty Forms and Pomps of Devotion, instituted in the Church

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of *Rome*, which instead of being any real Satisfaction for past Sins, do on the contrary tend to withdraw mens minds from a true Spirit of Piety, and from the practice of real virtue and holiness; filling them with endless and unprofitable Superstitions; and therefore rather provoking than appeasing the wrath of God! There is indeed one sort of Sacrifice, which if it were true, (as it is confidently pretended,) *would* be *really* an available propitiation for Sin; and that is, the *repeating* of the great *Sacrifice of the death of Christ*; which those of that Communion now mentioned, affirm to be done daily in their Sacrifice of the Mass. But this, the Apostle expressly tells us, is impossible; For Christ, says he, *does not offer himself often, as the high-priest entred into the holy place every year with blood of others*; (for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the World;) *But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself*; Heb. ix 25. Having *by one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified*, ch. x. ver. 14; *having once suffered for Sins, the just for the unjust*, as it is expressed in the words of the Text; and by St. *Paul* still more emphatically, Heb. ix. 27; *As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment*; *so Christ was once offered to bear the Sins of many; and unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time without Sin unto Salvation.* In our rendring of which last words, there seems to be a transposition. For the Intention of the Apostle seems to be, not to say *that Christ shall come again* without Sin, (which is nothing remarkable;) *but that, having once suffered to take away mens sins, he should the second time, to them that* looked *for him* without Sin, *i. e.* to them who returned not to the Sins from which they were *once* redeemed by him, *appear again unto Salvation.* There *is* therefore but *one* Sacrifice truly and effectually available to the expiation of Sin, which is the death of Christ; and all other Propitiations and Satisfactions whatsoever, which have been or can be invented by men, are weak and ineffectual.

Thirdly; From the Doctrines now explained, we may learn to have a deep sense of the wonderful Mercy and Goodness of God, in designing and appointing the redemption of mankind. When the Authority of God had been trampled upon, and the Honour of his Laws so diminished by Sin, that it was not consistent with the wisdom of the supreme Governour of all things, to remit the punishment due to sinful man, without some greater satisfaction than it was possible for man to make; that then the only begotten Son of God, who was unspeakably happy in the bosom of his Father, should voluntarily condescend to assume our frail Nature, and be contented to be clothed with Misery and mortality; that from the glorious Majesty of Heaven, from being in the form of God, and most high in the glory of his Father, he should stoop down to the earth, and submit to such cruel Sufferings and so ignominious a death, for the redemption of rebellious and Apostate Men, this is such an instance of Goodness and tender Mercy, as can never be embraced and entertained with sufficient joy and thankfulness. *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

Fourthly; From hence we may observe the absolute necessity of our own reformation, in order to our being made partakers of this Mercy. God hath in this *very* dispensation of Pardon and Mercy, testified a greater and more irreconcilable Hatred against Sin, than if he had even immediately punished it by the destruction of the Sinner. For if God, when he was about to display the infinite abundance of his Mercy in the forgiveness of Sin, would not accept of any smaller Ransom than the blood of his only begotten Son; what Spark of hope can there be left to any man who yet continues in Sin, that he shall escape the vengeance of God? If such great and terrible afflictions fell upon the *beloved Son of God*, for the Sins of *others*; what dreadful vengeance must *we* expect, if neglecting this great Salvation we come at last to receive the punishment of *our own?* There have not been wanting some men, (as I before observed,) who have made it an objection against the truth of Christ's Satisfaction, that it would not be *just* in God to permit an innocent person to suffer

instead

inſtead of the Offender: And indeed to puniſh the innocent inſtead of the guilty, *is not* juſt: But to *permit* an innocent Perſon, freely and *voluntarily* to give himſelf a ranſom for the Offender, cannot be denied to be conſiſtent with juſtice. But then we ought alſo to conſider, that it is ſuch a ſtupendous inſtance of Love and Mercy, as ought to raiſe in us an eternal dread and horrour of Sin, the forgiveneſs of which was purchaſed upon ſuch difficult terms. And which forgiveneſs if we deſpiſe, by returning again to our Sins, crucifying to ourſelves the Son of God afreſh, and putting him to an open Shame, *counting the blood of the Covenant wherewith we were ſanctified an unholy thing*, and doing deſpite unto the Spirit of grace; the Apoſtle aſſures us, *that our God* even the Father of Mercies, *is a conſuming Fire*; *that there remains no more Sacrifice for Sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which ſhall devour the adverſaries*; *that our Lord ſhall come in flaming Fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not his Goſpel*; *who ſhall be deſtroyed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord and from the glory of his Majeſty*; *when the wicked ſhall cry to the Mountains to cover them and to the Hills to fall on them, and hide them from the wrath of him that ſitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.* The Wrath of the Lamb, is a very emphatical phraſe, ſignifying that our Redeemer himſelf, who loved us and gave himſelf for us, will yet finally have no pity on the impenitent. The *very forgiveneſs* purchaſed by the blood of Chriſt, is obtained, not at all for thoſe who continue in Sin, but for thoſe only who forſake it. Wherefore unleſs we effectually reform our lives, and renounce all known Sin, perfecting Holineſs in the fear of God; we have no part in the Death of Chriſt, nor any benefit of his Paſſion. So that, without true repentance and amendment of life, Mercy itſelf, even this infinite Fountain of Mercy, *the Sufferings and Blood of Chriſt*, will do us no kindneſs; Nay, ſo far from That, that on the contrary the neglecting to embrace the terms of ſo gracious a Covenant, will (as has been ſhown,) infinitely inflame our guilt, and increaſe our condemnation. O that all thoſe would ſeriouſly conſider this, who taking no care to obey his commandments, yet hope to have their Sins pardoned through the merits of Chriſt, and as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, *continue in Sin that Grace may abound, whoſe condemnation is moſt juſt.* It ſeems there were ſome men, even in the Apoſtle's time, ſo very unreaſonable, as to imagine they might the more ſafely ſin, becauſe they were not under the Law, but under Grace; and, becauſe the Death of Chriſt had made attonement for Sins that were paſt, that therefore they might with leſs danger return to their Sins again for the time to come. Whereas juſt on the contrary *They* ought to have concluded, and it concerns *Us* to obſerve, that for That very reaſon, becauſe we have once received Forgiveneſs, therefore we ought to take the more earneſt heed to ſin no more, leſt a worſe thing happen unto us, and there remain no more Sacrifice for Sin. *Know ye not*, ſays St. *Paul* to ſuch perſons, *that ſo many of us as were baptized into Jeſus Chriſt, were baptized into his Death. Therefore we are buried with him by Baptiſm into Death, that like as Chriſt was raiſed from the dead by the glory of the Father, even ſo we alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of life*; Rom. vi. 3.

Fifthly and *Laſtly*; From what hath been hitherto ſaid, we may learn the *neceſſity* of the deſtruction of the incorrigible, to vindicate the Authority of the Laws of God. By this laſt diſpenſation of the Goſpel, God has done all that was conſiſtent with the wiſdom of his Government; and has gone even further than ſome men can think reconcilable with his Juſtice and Goodneſs, in laying the puniſhment of our offences upon an innocent perſon, that we might (conſiſtently with the Rules of his eternal Government) become capable of pardon and forgiveneſs. If then, notwithſtanding this laſt means, which God has made uſe of for our recovery, we ſtill continue incorrigible, there is *no remedy* but we muſt fall into perdition. If we neglect this *laſt* and *great* Salvation, it cannot be but we muſt at length be found in that deplorable ſtate, into which the children of *Iſrael* are deſcribed to have fallen, 2 *Chron.* xxxvi. 15; which ſeems to be a type of the Chriſtian Apoſtacy: *They tranſgreſſed very much after all the*

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abominations of the heathen, and polluted the house of the Lord, which he had hallowed in Jerusalem; And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion upon his people and on his dwelling-place; But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people 'till there was no remedy; Therefore he brought upon them the King of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand. Even thus *we*, if notwithstanding the clear knowledge of the Truth, which God has revealed to us by his Son, and repeated by his ministers; we still continue to *sin wilfully*; there can be *no remedy, there remains no more Sacrifice for Sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversary.* Wherefore to conclude, while this our space of life lasteth, and God graciously affords us time to repent; let us resolve by an immediate and thorough reformation to flee from the wrath to come, before our feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and the things that belong to our peace be for ever hid from our eyes.

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Of the Humiliation and Sufferings of Chriſt.

MATT. xvi. 21, 22, 23.

From that time forth began Jeſus to ſhow unto his Diſciples, how that he muſt go unto Jeruſalem, and ſuffer many things, of the Elders and chief Prieſts and Scribes, and be killed, and be raiſed again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, ſaying, Be it far from thee, Lord, this ſhall not be unto thee. But he turned and ſaid unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an Offence unto me; for thou ſavoureſt not the things that be of God, but thoſe that be of Men.

THE Apoſtle St. *Peter*, having made a generous Profeſſion of his Belief, that Chriſt was the true Meſſias, the Son of the Living God; received from our Lord the following Anſwer, ver. 17, of this Chapter; *Jeſus ſaid unto him, Bleſſed art Thou Simon Barjona; for Fleſh and Blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven.* SERM. LIII.

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ven. The Meaning is: The Confeſſion you have Now made, is not a bare humane conjecture or Opinion; as ſome had before gueſſed him to be *Elias*, Others that he was *John the Baptiſt*, and Others that he was *one of the old Prophets* riſen from the Dead: But *Your* confeſſion, (ſaith he,) is the Very Truth; which the God whom ye ſerve, and whoſe Will you are deſirous to know and to obey, has directed you to diſcover. *And I ſay alſo unto thee, that thou art Peter*; ver. 18: Thou *Simon* the Son of *Jonah*, ſhalt for the Future be known by the Name of *Peter*, which ſignifies a *Rock*; a firm, unſhaken, and immoveable Profeſſor of the Truth. Thus it is in Scripture very uſual, to give Men emphatical and ſignificant Names. *Gen.* xvii. 5; *Thy Name ſhall be Abraham; for a Father of many Nations*, (ſo the word *Abraham* ſignifies in *Hebrew*,) *a Father of many Nations have I made thee.* Again, *Gen.* xxxii. 28; *Thy Name ſhall be called Iſrael; for as a Prince haſt thou Power with God and with men, and haſt prevailed.* So here likewiſe, *Thou art Peter*, thy Name ſhall henceforth be called *Peter*, that is, a Rock: *And upon this Rock will I build my Church, and the Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it.* The *Church*, is the *City and Temple* of God; a *City*, as St. *John* repreſents it, built upon twelve *Foundations*, in which were written the Names of the twelve Apoſtles of the Lamb. And accordingly good Chriſtians, ſaith St. *Paul* are builded together *upon the* Foundation *of the Apoſtles and Prophets, unto an holy Temple in the Lord.* And St. *Peter* in his firſt Epiſtle, ch. ii. 5; *Ye alſo*, ſaith he, *as* Living Stones, *are* built up, *a ſpiritual houſe* —— *unto God.* When therefore our Lord ſaid unto *Peter*, *upon this Rock will I build my Church*; his meaning plainly was, Thou ſhalt be a *principal Founder* of my Church, a moſt ſucceſsful Preacher of my Doctrine to the World, in the firſt Age of the Goſpel. The *Foundation-ſtone* of a Building, a Rock or well-laid Support, is not (as the Church of *Rome* ridiculouſly ſuppoſes) an Emblem of *Authority* or *Dominion*; but it ſignifies *firm* and *conſtant*, effectual and ſucceſsful Preaching of the Goſpel at the Beginning; which was the *Foundation* of the Church of God.

It follows, ver. 19; *And I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; and whatſoever thou ſhalt bind on Earth, ſhall be bound in Heaven; and whatſoever thou ſhall looſe on Earth, ſhall be looſed in Heaven:* The ſenſe is; Thou ſhalt firſt *open* the Kingdom of the Meſſiah, and make the firſt Publication of the Goſpel to the *Gentiles*; (which we read was accordingly fulfilled, in the ii*d*, x*th*, and xv*th* chapters of the *Acts*: And by the Terms of That Doctrine which you ſhall preach *on Earth*, ſhall every Man's Sentence be finally and judicially determined of God *in Heaven.* Profane, beyond all Profaneneſs, is the Doctrine of Thoſe, who contend that the *Apoſtles Themſelves*, much leſs that any of their fallible *Succeſſors*, had a *diſcretionary* Power of forgiving or retaining whoſe Sins they pleaſed. Honour ſufficient it is for any mortal Man, nay an Office which our *Saviour himſelf* did not diſdain, to be appointed a Preacher or Meſſenger of That Covenant of Reconciliation, according to the Terms and Conditions whereof, *God* will either forgive Mens Sins or retain them. St. *Paul* expreſſes the Senſe of this Truſt, with the greateſt Accuracy and Exactneſs of Expreſſion, Rom. ii. 16; *In the day*, ſaith he, *when* God *ſhall judge the Secrets of men by Jeſus Chriſt, according to* My *Goſpel.* To ſay that *God* will judge men *according to* Our *Goſpel*, or by the Rule of *That* Doctrine which *We are* commanded to Preach to the World; is the full and compleat meaning of thoſe ſublime words, *Whoſoever Sins ye forgive, they are forgiven; and whoſoever Sins ye retain, they are retained.*

Our Saviour having thus, in words more than uſually plain, made known to St. *Peter* and to the reſt of his Diſciples the Power and Glory of his Kingdom; he thought it a fit ſeaſon, to acquaint them alſo with his *Humiliation* and Sufferings; that they might not, being puffed up with great Thoughts of his Glory, be ſurprized and terrified at the day of his Affliction. And therefore

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fore *from that time forth*, (as it follows immediately in the words of the Text,) *from That time forth, began Jeſus to ſhow unto his Diſciples, how that he muſt go unto Jeruſalem, and ſuffer many Things of the Elders and chief Prieſts and Scribes, and be killed, and be raiſed again the third Day.* It is very obſervable, that not only in This place, but in almoſt all other Parts of our Saviour's Hiſtory, it was his conſtant Method, when he had acquainted his Diſciples with ſomething that was apt to exalt their Minds; it was his *conſtant* Method, to take That opportunity of intermixing in his Diſcourſe ſome plain Intimations of his approaching Sufferings and Death. Thus in the very next Chapter of This Goſpel; when he had been *tranſfigured* before Three of his Diſciples, ver. 2, *and his face did ſhine as the Sun, and his garment was white as the Light*; and they heard a Voice from Heaven, ſaying, (ver. 5,) *This is my Beloved Son*; immediately after, he tells them, (ver. 12.) that *the Son of Man ſhould* ſuffer. And when the two Sons of *Zebedee*, (ch. xx. 21.) deſired to ſit, one on his right Hand, and the other on his left, in his Kingdom; to repreſs their too haſty Expectations, and prepare them for the Anſwer he intended to give them about the Neceſſity of *their* paſſing through many *Sufferings*, he took care in the firſt place, (ver. 18,) to foretel them of his *own*. Thus likewiſe in St. *Mark*'s Goſpel, ch. x. 29; when he had given his Diſciples that joyful promiſe, that whoſoever loſt any thing for *His* ſake, ſhould in the *preſent* Time receive an hundred fold, and in the end eternal Life; immediately he adds, ver. 33; that *the chief Prieſts ſhould condemn him to Death, and deliver him to the Gentiles to be crucified.* Again, in St. *Luke*'s Goſpel, ch. x. 17, when the Diſciples were tranſported with Joy at the Devils being made Subject unto them; immediately he turns their thoughts, (ver. 20,) to a more diſtant proſpect beyond Death and the Grave; *In This*, ſaith he, *rejoice not, that the Spirits are ſubject unto you; but rather rejoice, becauſe your Names are written in Heaven.* Laſtly, to mention but one place more; St. *Luke* xxii. 28; When our Lord gives his Apoſtles, That Great Promiſe, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my "Temptations; And I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as my Father hath "appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my Table in my King-"dom, and ſit on Thrones judging the twelve Tribes of Iſrael; *he at the* "Beginning introduces *it with that Admonition to Humility*, ver. 26; He "that is Greateſt among you, let him be as the youngeſt; and he that is Chief, "as he that doth ſerve: *And at the* End *he* concludes *it with that Notice of* "*his Sufferings*, ver. 37; I ſay unto you, that This that is written, muſt yet be "accompliſhed in me, And he was reckoned among the Tranſgreſſors; For the "things concerning me, have an End.

It is well worth remarking upon This place, that the Promiſe, *ye ſhall ſit on Thrones judging the twelve Tribes of Iſrael*, was made to the Apoſtles at That time when *Judas* was yet one of that Number; and conſequently, the Promiſe was as much made to *Him* as to Any of the reſt. From whence it follows undeniably, that He was *not* predeſtinated neceſſarily to be a Traitor, but fell from his Apoſtleſhip and from his Right to This Promiſe, by his after-voluntary Tranſgreſſion: As his Caſe is moſt accurately expreſſed in another place by our Saviour himſelf, *Joh.* vi. 70; *Have not I choſen* (in the Original it is, *Have not I elected*) *you twelve? and One of you is a Devil.* But This by the way.

That which I would here chiefly obſerve, is: that in all theſe Places, juſt as in the Words of the Text, our Saviour never makes his Diſciples any Great Promiſes either of *Temporal* Bleſſings, or *Eternal*; either of Succeſs in *This* World, or of Glory and Happineſs in the *next*; but he conſtantly mixes therewith ſome very plain intimations, of his own *Sufferings*, and of *Theirs*. From whence a careful Reader cannot fail to infer, that Temporal Power, Dominion and Grandeur, upon which Falſe Religions always value themſelves, and which Hypocrites always look upon as the Great Proſperity of the Church

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of Christ, is not in Truth at all a Character of Christ's True Religion, nor "a savouring the Things that be of God, but those that be of Men." The Prosperity of Christ's True Religion, consists in nothing but in the Prevalency of *Virtue and Righteousness*, and in establishing the *Fear of God* and the sincere expectation of a *future Judgment*, in the Hearts and Lives of Men.

The Apostle St. *Peter*, not yet sufficiently convinced of this Great Truth; but having entertained, in common with the rest of the Disciples, That pleasing Prejudice, that our Saviour's Kingdom was to be a *Temporal Kingdom*; could not bear the unexpected and surprizing Thought, of our Lord's *Suffering and Dying*; no, not tho' it was joined with an immediate Declaration of his Resurrection from the Dead. But out of singular affection to him, and zeal, as he thought, for his Service; "*he* took him, and began to rebuke "him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; This shall not be unto thee." But our Saviour, never angry upon any other Occasion, than when something offered itself that would be a Hindrance to the Salvation of Mankind, and to His doing the Will of Him that sent him; *turned and said unto Peter*, with a seemingly more than usual Sharpness; "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou "art an Offence unto me; for thou savourest not the Things that be of God, "but those that be of Men." The word, *Satan*, in this place, carries with it an appearance of greater Severity in the *Translation*, than it does in the *Original*. For *Satan*, in the *Jews* language, signifies in general Any *Adversary*. Now because the *Devil* is in the highest Sense the *Great Adversary* of Mankind; hence the Word, *Satan*, has by way of Eminence been usually, both in Scripture and in common Speech, appropriated to *Him*. But *Originally* it signifies only an *Adversary* in general; and is accordingly, in different places of Scripture, ascribed to different Persons. "2 Sam. xix. 22; David *said*, "What have I to do with you, ye Sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this Day "be *Adversaries* unto me?" in the *Hebrew* it is, that ye should this Day be *Satan* unto me? Thus therefore in the Text; when our Saviour says to St. *Peter*, *Get thee behind me*, Satan; it is as if he had said, "Thou art not Now "acting the part of a *Friend* to me, as thou thinkest thyself to be; but That "of an *Enemy*." The *Sense* is the same, as in that affectionate Expostulation of St. *Paul* with those Brethren, who would have perswaded him to avoid going to *Jerusalem*, where he must be in danger to suffer: "Acts xxi. 13; "What mean ye to weep, and to break mine Heart? for I am ready, not to "be *bound* only, but also to *die* at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord." However; though this Reproof of our Saviour to St. *Peter*, was in reality nothing more but a friendly Rebuke, and not a mark of *high* or *lasting* displeasure; yet probably the seeming Severity in the *manner* of the Expression, might by the divine Wisdom be intended with a *particular View*, that it might be left upon Record as a Guard against that extravagant Opinion, which God foreknew future Ages would entertain, of St. *Peter's* personal Authority. Of the same kind, seems to be the providential permitting of St *Peter* to *fall*, and to *deny his Master*, more shamefully than any of the Other Disciples; and the recording, in Scripture-history, how St. *Paul* afterwards *withstood him to the Face, because he was to be blamed*; Gal. ii. 11. And with the like intention probably it was, that our Saviour seems to *affect* always, to speak as it were *slightly* of the *Blessed Virgin*; "Woman, what have I to do with thee? "*and*, yea *rather*, Blessed are they, that hear the word of God, and keep it.

Besides all which, it is to observed further; that These Instances of our Saviour's so severely reproving St. *Peter*, and of St. *Peter's* falling so shamefully, and the like; are moreover great Arguments of the *Sincerity and Plainness* of the Writers of the Gospel-history, in taking no care to conceal their own and their Companions Faults and Infirmities.

Having thus explained the *Circumstantial* parts of the Text; The *Last* thing I shall observe, is *That Great Doctrinal Truth*, which our Lord here opens to his Disciples; "*that* he *must* go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things, of the "Elders

" Elders and Chief Priests and Scribes; and be killed, and be raised again the SERM.
" third Day." The Question is; *why* does he say, he *must* go? What was the LIII.
Necessity of Christ's delivering himself up into the hands of his Enemies, to be crucified and slain? The Answer to This Question, is,

I. *First*; It was at *that time*, and in the Sense our Saviour *Then* spake it, *Necessary* for *This* Reason; because otherwise the *Prophecies*, that went before concerning him, could not have been fulfilled. This Reason, *our Saviour himself* gives, Matt. xxvi. 53; "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, " and he shall presently give me more than twelve Legions of Angels? But " how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that Thus it *must* be? *Again*. Mar. " xiv. 48; Are ye come out as against a Thief, with swords and with staves " to take me? I was daily with you in the Temple, teaching, and ye took me " not: But the Scriptures *must* be fulfilled. *And* Luke xxiv. 26, 44; Ought " not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?——— " And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while " I was yet with you, that all things *must* be fulfilled which are written in the " Law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning me?——— " And he said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it *behoved* Christ to suf- " fer, and to rise from the Dead the third day." The same reason is alledged also by the *Apostles* in *Their* Preaching; Acts xvii. 2; " Paul-----reasoned with " them out of the Scriptures; Opening and alledging, that Christ must *needs* " have suffered, and risen again from the dead." And to mention but one place more; 1 Pet. i. 10; " Of which Salvation the Prophets have inquired " and searched diligently,——searching what and what manner of Time the " Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before-hand " the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory that should follow."

This is the *first* reason: Christ must *needs* suffer, because the Scriptures of the Prophets had expresly foretold, that he *should* do so. But then

II. *Secondly*; The Question returns; *why* was it originally *appointed* that the *Messiah* should suffer, and, in Consequence of that Appointment, foretold by the Prophets that he *should* do so? Could not God, if he had pleased, absolutely and of his Supreme Authority, without any Sufferings at all, have pardoned the Sins of those whose Repentance he thought fit to accept? Undoubtedly it becomes not *Us* to presume to say he had not *Power* so to do, if *That* were all the Question. But Sin is in its own Nature hateful to God, and it was *Fit* that he should testify his Indignation against it. Wherefore though God in Mercy is always willing to pardon true Penitents, that is, those who actually forsake all vicious Courses, and effectually return to the Obedience of God's Commands; yet the Scripture as constantly represents him doing it in such a manner, as that *without Blood there is no remission*; Heb. ix. 21. The Death of Christ therefore was *necessary*, to make the Pardon of Sin reconcilable, not perhaps absolutely with strict *Justice*; (for We cannot presume to say, but God might consistently with mere *Justice* have remitted as much of his own Right as he pleased, by his own supreme and uncontroulable Sovereignty, without requiring any Satisfaction at all;) But the Death of Christ was *necessary*, at least in *This* Respect, to make the Pardon of Sin consistent with the *Wisdom* of God in his Good Government of the World, and to be a proper *Attestation* of his irreconcilable *Hatred* against all Unrighteousness. Hence Christ is stiled by the Apostle, the *Propitiation for our Sins*; 1 John ii. 2: And Rom. iii. 23; " All have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely " by his grace, thro' the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; Whom God has " set forth to be a *Propitiation* thro' faith in his blood, to declare his righte- " ousness, (*that is, his Mercy,*) for the remission of Sins that are past, through " the forbearance of God." This was the great Reason, the great End, Design, and Effect, of Christ's Suffering and Dying for us; that, consistently with the Honour of the Laws of God, and with his irreconcilable Hatred against all Unrighteousness, he might declare Remission of past Sins upon Repentance, and establish a new Covenant of Grace and Mercy, by which the O-

SERM. LIII. bedience of *Sinners* might become acceptable before God. In reſpect of the *former* part of this Deſign, the Remiſſion of paſt Sins; we are ſaid in Scripture, to *have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveneſs of Sins*; Col. i. 14. In reſpect of the *latter* part, the eſtabliſhing a new Covenant of Grace; God is ſaid to have *made us accepted in the Beloved*, Eph. i. 6; and Chriſt is accordingly repreſented as our Great High-Prieſt; who having *purchaſed* a Church *with his own blood*, or (as it is elſewhere expreſſed) having *given himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works*; is from henceforth our Advocate and Interceſſor with the Father, that *he may preſent to himſelf a glorious Church, not having Spot or Wrinkle or any ſuch thing, but that it ſhould be Holy and without Blemiſh*. For his *Own* Sins, no man is worthy to be the Miniſter of Reconciliation: For the Sins of *Others*, no man who is himſelf a Sinner, can with Confidence make Interceſſion. *Sacrifices* and *Expiations*, were nothing elſe but *Teſtimonies of Repentance:* Neither was it poſſible, that the *Blood of Bulls or of Goats, ſhould take away Sins*, or *make Him that did the Service perfect as pertaining to the Conſcience*. But as theſe external and typical Expiations *ſanctified to the purifying of the* Fleſh; ſo *the Blood of Chriſt, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himſelf without Spot to God, purges the* Conſcience *from dead works to ſerve the living God*; Heb. ix. 14. The Meaning is: God's appointing and accepting the Sacrifice of the Death of Chriſt, is to the Conſcience an Aſſurance of the real and effectual Pardon of *paſt* Sins, to them that truly repent; and an Encouragement to Obedience for the *future*, ſeeing *we have an High-Prieſt who can be touched with the feeling of our Infirmities*, and *ever liveth to make interceſſion for us*; ſo that our Endeavours, if *ſincere*, though by no means *perfect*, yet ſhall not fail of finding Acceptance with God in and thro' the Mediation of the Beloved.

The Practical *Inferences* from what has been ſaid, are as follows.

Firſt; This Doctrine concerning Chriſt's dying for our Sins, is a ſtrong Argument for the indiſpenſable Neceſſity of our *own* Repentance and Reformation of Life. For the Deſign of Chriſt's Suffering, was not to purchaſe Grace that Sin might abound, but to aboliſh Sin *paſt*, and to preſerve men from Sin for the *time to come*. 2 Cor. v. 15; "He died for All; that they which live, "ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him who died for them, "and roſe again;" Who died for them to This End, that they Themſelves *being dead to Sin, ſhould live unto righteouſneſs*; 1 Pet. ii. 24. This is what we are baptized into, when we are baptized into his Death: Rom. vi. 4; "We "are buried with Him by Baptiſm into Death, that like as Chriſt was raiſed "up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even ſo We alſo ſhould walk "in Newneſs of Life." And if we do not ſo walk; it had been better for us, *not to have known the way of Righteouſneſs*; it had been better for us, that Chriſt had not died for us at all.

Secondly; The Conſideration of Chriſt's giving himſelf a Sacrifice for our Sins, is, to them who truly repent, an Encouragement to approach with Confidence to the Throne of Grace, in our *Prayers* to *God* through *Him*. "In him "we have boldneſs and acceſs with confidence by the Faith of Him; Eph. "iii. 12: For he that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us All, "how ſhall he not with Him alſo freely give us all things! Rom. viii. 32: If, "when we were Enemies, we were reconciled to God by the Death of his "Son; much more being reconciled, we ſhall be ſaved by his Life; chap. v. 10. "Let us therefore, *ſaith the Apoſtle*, come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, "that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need;" Heb. iv. 16. Our Saviour, having himſelf *been made like unto his Brethren*, and knowing how *to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities*; is become to us *a merciful and faithful High-Prieſt in things pertaining to God*. The Inference from which Doctrine, is, ch. x. 19; "Having therefore, brethren, boldneſs to "enter into the Holieſt by the Blood of Jeſus, by a new and living way which "he hath conſecrated for us;——and having an High-Prieſt over the houſe

"of

" of God; Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of Faith, SERM
" having our heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed LIII.
" with pure water.

Thirdly and *Lastly*; The Death of Christ, is a great Example to us, of patient Suffering at any time in well-doing; when the Providence of God shall call us to bear Testimony in That manner to his Truth. " 1 *Pet.* iii. 17; It is " better, if the Will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-" doing; For Christ also has once suffered for Sins, the just for the unjust. *And* " ch. ii. 20; If when, ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; this " is acceptable with God; For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ " also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his Steps; " who did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth.

SERMON LIV.

The Method of Deliverance through Chriſt.

ROM. vii. 24, 25.

O wretched man that I am! Who ſhall deliver me from the Body of this death? I thank God, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. So then, with the mind I my ſelf ſerve the Law of God but with the Fleſh the Law of Sin.

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IN diſcourſing upon theſe Words, I ſhall endeavour *1ſt*, to explain, *What* the Apoſtle here means by this Phraſe, *The Body of Death*. *2dly*, I ſhall conſider, *wherein* conſiſts the *Wretchedneſs* of thoſe Men's Condition, who are under the unhappy Circumſtances of That State, which the Apoſtle here ſignifies by the figurative Expreſſion of being ſubject to *the Body of This Death: O Wretched man that I am!* *3dly*, *Wherein* conſiſts the *Difficulty* here repreſented, of Men's *recovering* themſelves out of this unhappy State: *Who ſhall deliver me from the Body of this Death?* *4thly*, The *Means* here ſuggeſted, by which this Difficulty, though naturally very great *may* yet nevertheleſs be overcome: It may be done, *Through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* *5thly*, The *Great Reaſon* we have to be

Thankful

Thankful to God, for vouchsafing us this Method of Deliverance thro' Christ: *I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.* And in the *Last* place I shall endeavour distinctly to explain, *how*, and *for what reason*, the Apostle, in his Representation of this Whole matter, does *himself personate* the Sinner he would describe; and chooses to express the miserable State of the *greatest Sinners*, in Words seemingly spoken as if it had been concerning *Himself: Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver* Me? And, *With the mind* I myself *serve the Law of God, but with the Flesh the Law of Sin.*

I. *First*; I am to explain, *What* the Apostle here means by this Phrase, *The Body of Death.* The *Life* of every *Living Being* in general, and of every *rational Being* in particular, is the *Free Gift* of God; bestowed originally, without Any Claim of Right; continued all along, by his mere Good Pleasure; and whensoever *He* pleases, who freely gave it, it may without any Injustice be taken away. For God who was under no Obligation to give Life to any Being at all, is much less under any Obligation of Justice to make any Creature immortal. The mere *Ending* therefore of that Life, which only by the free good Pleasure of God *ever Began*, is no Wrong or Injury to Any even the most innocent Being. And This would equally be so, whether Death were an entire Ceasing to exist, or whether it be considered as (what both Reason and Revelation teaches) a Translation only from one State or Manner of being to another. But though *Death* be in itself thus natural, considered barely as the Bound or Limit of a *Finite Life*; yet by the *Time* or *Manner*, and, above all, by the *Consequences* of its being inflicted, it *may* very properly, and frequently *is* appointed to be, the just and severe Punishment of Sin. Even by the Laws of *Men*, though they know that Death is *in itself* inevitable, and *after Death* they *have nothing more that they can do*; yet to the most capital Crimes *Death* is the *Punishment* annexed, upon account of its being inflicted both *before* the Natural *Time*, and with *Circumstances* of *Severity and Terrour.* Much more in the Laws of *God*, in whose hands the *Consequences* of Death are, and who *after Death* can continue what *Punishment* he pleases; much more (I say) in *His* Laws, is the *Threatning of Death* justly terrible. Our First Parent in Paradise, was in all Probability created *naturally subject to Mortality*; Yet the Punishment threatned to his Transgression was *Death:* By which was meant the Excluding him from the Tree of Life, that is from the only possible Means whereby his *actual Dying* might have been prevented: And what the *Consequences* of This Death might be in a Future State, was left uncertain. Since *That* God has now *expressly* threatned *Eternal Death*, as the Punishment of Sin: That is, he has set before Sinners the Miseries of a *Future State*, as terrible in Proportion to the Duration of *That* State; as the Miseries that attend Mortality, are in Proportion to the *present* State. And in the Terrour of this *Future Punishment* it is, that the Sharpness of the *Sting of Sin* consists, and the true insupportable *Weight* of the *Body of Death.* To every *presumptuous*, to every *wilful* Act of known *Sin*, has God threatned this *Second Death:* How much more to Those who are *laden with Iniquities*, and oppressed with Habits of *Vice*, is the *Body of this Death* justly terrible! It is like lying under the Terrour of *Many Deaths*, under the *Weight* of numerous and unremovable *Burdens.* The *like* manner of Expression, is in Scripture made use of upon *Other* Occasions. Thus Rom. vi. 6; *that the* Body *of Sin might be destroyed*; That is, that every wicked *Habit* might be rooted out; that the *Weight* the *Burden*, the *whole Power* of *Sin*, might be effectually removed. Again; Col. ii. 11; "Putting off the "*Body* of the Sins of the Flesh, by the circumcision of Christ:" That is, (as the same Apostle elsewhere expresses it,) *laying aside every Weight*, breaking off every Habit of Wickedness, reforming every Instance in the *Whole Catalogue* of unrighteous Practices, casting off in every Particular the Works of the Flesh; *by the circumcision of Christ*, by the *Christian Circumcision*; that is, by the Practice of *real* Virtue and Holiness, of which the *Jewish literal circumcision* was but a *Type* or a *Figure.* After the same manner of speaking, the ceremonial Observances of the *Jewish* Law, are in the same Chapter called *a* Shadow *of* Heb. xii. 1.

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things to come, ver. 17; *but the* Body, ſays he, (the *real Subſtantial Virtues* typified by thoſe Shadows; *the* Body) *is of Chriſt*. And thus therefore likewiſe in the words of the Text; the Body *of This Death*, ſignifies the *Reality*, the *Greatneſs*, the *Weight* and *Inſupportableneſs* of the *Miſery* here intended to be expreſſed.

II. *Secondly*; I propoſed to ſhow, in the *Second* place, *wherein* conſiſts the *Wretchedneſs* of thoſe mens condition, who are under the unhappy circumſtances of That State, which the Apoſtle here deſcribes by the figurative Expreſſion, of being ſubject to the *Body of This Death: O wretched man that I am!* The *natural* apprehenſion of Death, conſidered barely *in itſelf*, without *Any* additional aggravation; is, to every Living Being, neceſſarily uneaſy. Very affectionately is this expreſſed by the Author of the Book of *Eccleſiaſticus* ch. xl. 1; *Great Travel is created for every man, and an heavy yoke is upon the Sons of Adam:* —*Their imagination of things to come, and the day of Death, trouble their Thoughts, and cauſe fear of Heart; From him that ſitteth on a Throne of Glory, unto him that is humbled in Earth and Aſhes.* To *Such* eſpecially, as enjoy great *Proſperity*, does this natural apprehenſion cauſe yet *more* Diſturbance. "O Death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee, to a man that liveth at Reſt "in his poſſeſſions,—and that hath Proſperity in all things! ch. xli. 1." But This is what may in great meaſure be overcome by the conſiderations of *Reaſon*. The true *Sting* of Death, That which really and only makes the Thoughts of it juſtly *inſupportable*, is *Sin*. In all *other* reſpects, it is only what *happens unto all fleſh, both man and beaſt*; But it is *ſevenfold more upon Sinners*; Ecclus. xl. 8. To *Sinners*, the *Fear of Death* is what the Apoſtle calls, being *all their life-time ſubject to Bondage*; Heb. ii. 15. It is, *the Spirit of Bondage to Fear*; Rom. viii. 15. For, ſo long as there is reaſonable Hope in a *Future* State, *the Spirit of a man will ſuſtain his* Preſent *Infirmity*, will bear the Thoughts even of Death itſelf with Comfort: But a *Spirit wounded* with the expectation of *Death* being *not* the *End*, but the *Beginning* of Sorrows; *who can bear?* The *ſtrong* exclamation in the Text, is infinitely too *weak* to expreſs it: *O wretched man that I am!*

III. *Thirdly*; I am to conſider, *Wherein* conſiſts the *Difficulty* here repreſented, of mens *recovering* themſelves out of this unhappy State: *Who ſhall deliver me from the body of this Death?* The manner of Expreſſion, *Who ſhall deliver me?* is ſuch as uſually denotes *ſuch a kind* of *Difficulty*, as there is very little hope of overcoming. And the *Ground* of this Difficulty, is *twofold*; partly ariſing from the appointment of *God*, and partly from the *natural circumſtances* of the State wherein the *perſons themſelves* are involved. By the appointment of *God*, Sinners are under the juſt ſentence of Condemnation: And out of *His* Hands, no Force, no Fraud, no Artifice can deliver them. What Expiation, what Atonement, what Interceſſion will prevail with him to *reverſe* the Sentence of Death, they cannot naturally know: And the Inquiry after it, is very apt to lead men into pernicious Superſtitions. *Repentance itſelf*, is but a Ground of *Hope*; and a *probable* Motive of Compaſſion. Without *bringing forth* Fruits Meet *for Repentance*, the Repentance is nothing: And to bring forth ſuch Fruits *really and effectually*, is That *other part* of the Difficulty, which I ſaid *naturally* ariſes from the *circumſtances* of the State, wherein the Perſons here ſpoken of are involved. To an *habitual Sinner*, real *Amendment* of Life and Manners, and acquiring the Habits of the *Virtues* contrary to the Vices he has practiſed; is like *plucking out a right Eye* or *cutting off a right hand*; it is like *the Ethiopian changing his Skin*, or *the Leopard his Spots*. For, *to whomſoever men yield themſelves Servants to obey; his Servants they are, to whom they obey*; Rom. vi. 16; And, *of whomſoever a man is overcome, of the ſame is he brought in bondage*; 2 Pet. ii. 19. This *Slavery* to Sin, is with wonderful affection deſcribed through this *whole chapter*, of which my *Text* is the *Concluſion*. They who have thus *ſubjected* themſelves to vicious habits, are repreſented as being *ſold under Sin*; ver. 14: *For, That which they do, they allow not;* —— *but what they hate, That they do*; ver. 15: *The good that they would, they do not; but the Evil*

Evil which they would not, That they do; ver. 19: *They delight in the Law of God, after the inner man*; *But they ſee another law in their members, warring againſt the law of their Mind, and bringing them into captivity to the Law of Sin*; ver. 22, 23; And, *Who ſhall deliver them from the Body of this Death?*

IV. *Fourthly*; Here are the *Means* ſuggeſted, by which this Difficulty, though naturally very great, *may* yet nevertheleſs be overcome: It may be done, *Through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* By the revelation of the Goſpel, God has Now expreſsly declared, *what expiation* he has *appointed* and *accepted* for Sin. He has given aſſurance of *Pardon*, upon condition of *Repentance* and *Amendment of Life.* He has promiſed the *Aſſiſtance* of his *Grace*, and the *Influences* of his *Holy Spirit*, to make *effectual* the *Endeavours* of thoſe who, under *Great Trials*, are ſincerely deſirous to obey him. He has *ſtrengthened* the *Motives* of Religion, by *appointing a day, in the which he will judge the World in righteouſneſs*; and by *bringing Life and Immortality* more clearly *to Light.* A firm Perſwaſion and ſtedfaſt Belief of theſe Great Truths, will, with the divine aſſiſtance, effectually enable men to deſtroy the Habit and the Power of Sin: *This is the Victory that overcometh the World even our Faith*; 1 Joh. v. 4. And when once the Habit of *Sin* is rooted out, and the Law of God becomes the governing Principle, and the real effectual Rule of Life and Manners; the *Sting of Death* is then conſequently taken away: *Rom.* viii. 1; "There is now "No condemnation to Them which are in Chriſt Jeſus, who walk not after the "Fleſh, but after the Spirit: For the Law of the Spirit of Life in Chriſt Je-"ſus, hath made me free from the Law of Sin and Death." The Senſe is: Whoſoever, under the Influences of *Chriſt*'s Holy Religion, by the Inſtruction, by the Promiſes, and by the Aſſiſtances of the Goſpel, is enabled to lead a truly virtuous and good life, in expectation of a righteous judgment to come, and of a future Reward from the Divine Goodneſs; for the ſame Reaſon, and in the ſame proportion, as he is delivered from the Bondage and Slavery of *Sin*, he is delivered likewiſe from the *ſentence of Condemnation*, and from that *Fear of Puniſhment*, which in the Text is ſtiled *the Body of This Death.*

V. *Fifthly*, Here is expreſſed the *Great Reaſon* we have to be *Thankful* to God, for vouchſafing us this Method of Deliverance thro' Chriſt: *I thank God, thro' Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* The Deliverance which God has mercifully vouchſafed to Sinners through Chriſt, is what he was under *no Obligation* either of Juſtice or Goodneſs to have provided for them. He might very juſtly, and without any impeachment of his Goodneſs too, have ſuffered all thoſe to periſh, who had wilfully and preſumptuouſly tranſgreſſed his righteous Commands; and could even *out of the Stones*, as it is expreſſed, *Matt.* iii. 9; *have raiſed up children unto Abraham:* That is; He could immediately have deſtroyed the wilful Tranſgreſſors, and have created others from whom he might have expected a better Obedience. But when, inſtead of This, his Compaſſion moved him to grant Repentance to Sinners, to admit them to a further Trial, and, by his gracious Promiſe in Chriſt, to give Power to as many as would embrace and obey the Goſpel, that they ſhould receive an Atonement and obtain Reconciliation with God, that they ſhould *become the Sons of God*, that they ſhould *paſs from Death unto Life*, that they ſhould (as the Scripture expreſſes it) "*be* re-"deemed from the Earth, *be* redeemed from among men, *be* redeemed from "Death *and* ranſomed from the Power of the Grave;" This is the higheſt poſſible Obligation to *Thankfulneſs*, and to the moſt diligent Endeavours of future Obedience.

VI. *Sixthly* and *Laſtly*; I propoſed in the laſt place to explain, *how* and *for what Reaſon*, the Apoſtle, in his repreſentation of this whole matter, does *himſelf perſonate* the Sinner he would deſcribe; and chooſes to expreſs the miſerable State of the *greateſt Sinners*, in words ſeemingly ſpoken as if it had been concerning *Himſelf.* "Wretched man that I am! Who ſhall deliver *Me?* *And*, "with the mind *I my ſelf* ſerve the Law of God, but with the Fleſh the Law "of Sin." And this deſerves to be the more carefully and diſtinctly cleared, becauſe upon a wrong interpretation of theſe words, has been founded a No-

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tion moſt pernicious to Religion, as if it were poſſible, and even authorized by the Example of the Apoſtle himſelf, that a man living in the habitual Practice of Any Vice, might nevertheleſs be in a State of Salvation, by approving in his Mind the Law of God: That is, that his Wickedneſs might be rendred *excuſable*, by *That very Circumſtance* which is its higheſt Aggravation; namely, its being contrary to the *Reaſon and Conviction* of his own *Mind or Conſcience*. Than which, nothing can poſſibly be more abſurd. The plain and certain Meaning therefore of Theſe words, I myſelf *ſerve with the Fleſh the Law of Sin*; is, not *I Paul who wrote this epiſtle*, but *I the Sinner, I the miſerable Perſon all along deſcribed in This chapter*. And the *reaſon why* the Apoſtle choſe to ſpeak after this manner, is becauſe it carries with it more of *tenderneſs and compaſſion*, and is *more moving* and *leſs offenſive*, to expreſs things of This kind in the *Firſt perſon*, which is *more general*; than to apply them directly and *more particularly* to the *perſon intended*, who may uſually with better effect be left to make the application for himſelf. It is very common in All Languages, even at *This day*, for men to expreſs themſelves after This manner: And innumerable Inſtances may be found in Scripture, wherein this way of ſpeaking is uſed with the *greateſt propriety*, and ſo as, in the apprehenſion of Any reaſonable and unprejudiced perſon, to carry along with it No ambiguity at all. Thus when the ſame Apoſtle argues, *Rom.* iii. 7; *If the Truth of God hath more abounded through* My *Lie unto his Glory, why yet am I alſo judged as a Sinner?* It is evident he does not there ſpeak concerning *Himſelf*; but puts That queſtion in the *perſon* of one of Thoſe who ſaid, *Let us do evil, that good may come: Whoſe damnation*, ſays he, in the very next Verſe, *is juſt*.

Again: 1 *Cor.* x. 29; after having given his advice in theſe words, *If any man ſay unto you, This is offered in Sacrifice unto Idols, eat not, for the ſake* of *His Conſcience* that *ſhewed it*; Inſtead of going on to ſay in the *ſame* ſtyle; *for why is* Thy *Liberty judged of another man's conſcience?* he immediately proceeds as in his *own* perſon, *for why is* My *Liberty judged of another man's conſcience?*— and *why am* I *evil ſpoken of for That for which I give Thanks?* Meaning; why is *Any man in This caſe* evil-ſpoken of upon That account?

In the ſame chapter, having exhorted the *Corinthians* to *flee from Idolatry*; For, Ye *cannot* ſays he, *be partakers of the Lord's Table, and of the Table of Devils*; He immediately adds, ver. 22; *Do* We *provoke the Lord to jealouſy? are* We *ſtronger than He?* meaning evidently not to include *Himſelf*, but *Thoſe only* whom he was then charging with Idolatry. In like manner, *Eph.* ii. 3; "Among whom (*among which wicked Heathens*) alſo *We* all (*ſays he*) had our "converſation in times paſt, in the Luſts of our Fleſh: *Evidently ſpeaking, not* "*of* Himſelf *perſonally, who had always* exerciſed himſelf to have a conſcience "void of offence both towards God and towards Man;" but of the *Generality* of the corrupt *Jews* as well as of the *Gentiles*.

By the *ſame* figure of Speech, in his diſcourſe about the Laſt Judgment, (and not through any miſtaken apprehenſion, as ſome have imagined, of the World being to end in the *Age* then preſent: For, on the contrary, our Saviour himſelf expreſsly propheſied that *Jeruſalem ſhould be trodden down of the Gentiles* for a long ſeaſon; and St. *Paul* no leſs expreſsly foretold, that, *before the day of the Lord came*, there ſhould be a Great and Long *Apoſtacy* of Chriſtians: Not therefore, I ſay, through any miſtaken apprehenſion, as if the World was *then* coming to an End; but by the ſame vulgar figure of Speech, which I am now explaining,) does the Apoſtle, ſpeaking of Thoſe who ſhall be found alive at the day of Judgment, ſay; We *ſhall all be changed*; and We *which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord*.

To mention but *One* Inſtance more: When St. Paul reproves the *Corinthians* for their *Factious manner* of following different Teachers, he does it in theſe words; "1 *Cor.* i. 12; This I ſay, that every one of you ſaith, I am of Paul, "and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Chriſt." Not that *Paul*, and *Apollos*, and *Cephas*, were *themſelves* the perſons, about whom the Factions were really raiſed: But, (as may well be gathered from what he adds at the concluſion,)

conclusion,) he puts the Case of *Other Teachers*, in his *own*, and *Peter*'s, and *Apollos*'s name; that, under That Representation, he might reprove the Unreasonableness of the *Corinthian* Factions, the more *inoffensively* and the more *effectually*: "These things, *says he*, I have in *a Figure* transferred to myself and "to Apollos for *Your* sakes; that ye might learn in *Us*, not to think of Men, "above that which is written; ch. iv. 6.

And thus therefore likewise in the Words of the Text: *So then I myself*, (that is, not I *Paul*, but I the *self-same person*, the same miserable person represented thro' this whole chapter,) do at the same time, inconsistently and with the highest self-condemnation, both *with the mind serve the Law of God, and with the flesh the Law of Sin.*

The Application of what has been said, is plain; that no man, while he lives in the habitual Practice of *Any known Vice*, can possibly be in a State of Salvation. He is under the *Law of Sin and Death*, wretched and miserable: Nor can he by any other means be *delivered from the Body of this Death*, but *through Jesus Christ our Lord*; i. e. by the gracious Helps and Assistances of the Gospel, working in him *effectual Amendment* of Life and Manners, in Expectation of the righteous Judgment to come. Which real Amendment of Life, when it has *actually and effectually* taken place; *there* is Then (as the Apostle adds in the Words next following my Text) there is *Then*, and Then only "no condemnation to Them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, "but after the Spirit;——the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, *having* "made *them* free from the Law of Sin and Death."

SERMON LV.

Men have natural Abilities of Knowing GOD.

1 COR. i. 21.

For after that, in the Wiſdom of God, the World by Wiſdom knew not God, it pleaſed God by the fooliſhneſs of Preaching to ſave them that believe.

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BESIDES *That General* viciouſneſs and corruption of mankind, which made them averſe to entertain a Doctrine of ſuch Purity and Holineſs, as the Goſpel is; there were moreover *in particular* two very great Prejudices, which the firſt preachers of Chriſtianity had to encounter with at once, from two different ſorts of Adverſaries, the *Jews* and *Gentiles*: Whereof the one pretended, that this new Doctrine was ſet up in oppoſition to the Authority of *God*; the other alledged, that it was repugnant to the Reaſon and Underſtanding, of the wiſeſt and moſt learned *Men*. Objections indeed, either of which, if they had been well grounded, would have been of ſufficient weight to juſtify the oppoſition made to our Lord and his Apoſtles. But the weakneſs and unreaſonableneſs of *both* theſe Prejudices, was ſoon made apparent. For our Saviour, by doing ſuch works, as the Ruler of the *Jews* confeſſed *no man could do except God were with him*; abundantly proved himſelf to be a Teacher ſent by commiſſion from *God*: And,

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on the other hand, as to the *Reaſon* of conſiderate and impartial *men*; Wiſdom has been always, and always will be *juſtified of all her Children*. The *Jews* indeed were ſure they were the poſterity of *Abraham*, to whom God had made ſuch extenſive and ſuch laſting Promiſes; and therefore they could not eaſily believe, that God would *caſt away his people*: They were certain the Religion they profeſſed, was a Law of God's own delivering; and therefore they had reaſon to expect, that whoever attempted to *change the Cuſtoms which Moſes had* taught *them*, ſhould, in order to remove thoſe Cuſtoms, produce an Authority equal to that which eſtabliſhed them. The *Gentiles* could not make any plea altogether ſo reaſonable, becauſe they had not among them any particular form of Religion, which could with any tolerable colour pretend to be of Divine Inſtitution: Yet thus much they had reaſon to expect in general, that if a few mean perſons, ſuch as the Apoſtles were, undertook to eſtabliſh a new Religion, in oppoſition to the Wiſdom of all the learneſt and all the moſt celebrated Philoſophers that flouriſhed in their ſeveral Sects; theſe Preachers of the Goſpel ſhould at leaſt prove their Doctrine to be agreeable to *Reaſon*, as a neceſſary Requiſite to prepare men to conſider the evidences, of its being immediately ſent from God. Accordingly we find in Scripture abundant care taken, to ſatisfy *Both* theſe ſorts of Perſons; and indeed all other Oppoſers whatſoever, excepting thoſe only who ſet themſelves againſt the Goſpel merely out of obſtinacy, and *love Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their deeds are evil.*

To the Objections of the *Jews*, we find our Saviour replying, that he *came not to* deſtroy *the Law, but to* fulfil *it*; that the *moral* Law was not changed by him, but explained and enforced; that the *typical* Law was in its whole deſign, nothing but a real Prophecy of *him*; and therefore by ceaſing at his appearance, was not deſtroyed, but compleatly accompliſhed in its original and full intention; that accordingly all the *Prophets* in the Old Teſtament, pointed at him; that *Abraham* their Father *rejoiced to foreſee his day*; and that *Moſes* himſelf expreſsly *ſpoke of him*, as the great Prophet to whom they ought to hearken. Beſides all which, he produced the Teſtimony of greater *Miracles* for the proof of his Divine Authority, than thoſe by which *Law* itſelf had been at firſt eſtabliſhed.

On the other hand, againſt the Objections of the *Gentiles*, we find the Apoſtles not only urging the Teſtimony of their Miraculous *Works*, but proving alſo the credibility and *reaſonableneſs*, the excellency and *wiſdom* of their *Doctrine* itſelf; and that Wiſdom is in all reſpects juſtified of all her Children. That the God, whom they now declared in the Goſpel, was the ſame God, whom the Heathen World before ignorantly diſputed about, and ignorantly *worſhipped* in part, under the title of the *unknown God*; even the ſame God *who made the World, and all things therein*; who *giveth to all, life, and breath, and all things*; who *is not far from every one of us, for in him we live, and move, and have our being*; who *cauſeth his Sun to riſe on the evil and on the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt and on the unjuſt*; who in the darkeſt and moſt ignorant Ages of the World, *never left himſelf* wholly *without witneſs, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful ſeaſons, filling our hearts with food and gladneſs*: The Apoſtles further alledged, that it was very much contrary to Reaſon, to *think that the Godhead was like unto gold or ſilver or ſtone graven by art and man's device*; and extremely diſhonourable and abſurd, to *change the glory of the uncorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beaſts and creeping things*: That it was further very reaſonable to believe, that as there is *One God*, ſo there ſhould be *One Mediator between God and Man*, who might aſcertain to us the Pardon of Sin and the Acceptableneſs of Repentance: that That Immortality, about which the beſt of the Heathen-Philoſophers diſputed with great uncertainty and doubtfulneſs was a Truth *now* clearly *brought to light by the Goſpel*: Laſtly, That if they acknowledged it highly agreeable to natural Reaſon to believe, that God would judge the World; *why ſhould it be thought a thing incredible with them, that*, in order to That Judgment, *God ſhould raiſe the dead?* By theſe and the like Arguments did the Apoſtles prove

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both againſt *Jews* and *Gentiles*, that That Revelation of the Goſpel, which the One thought ſo contrary to their Law received from *God*, and the other judged ſo repugnant to the Wiſdom and Reaſon of *Men*; was really to Both of them, when impartially conſidered and examined, an undeniable Manifeſtation both of the Power and Wiſdom of *God*. " The Jews require a Sign, and the Greeks " ſeek after Wiſdom; But we preach Chriſt crucified, unto the Jews a ſtum- " bling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs; But unto them which are called, " both Jews and Greeks, Chriſt the Power of God, and the Wiſdom of God; " As the Argument is excellently ſummed up by St. *Paul*, in the words immediately following the Text.

The words of the Text itſelf, relate only to *One* of theſe Objections, againſt Chriſtianity; namely, That which was uſually urged by the *Gentile* Unbelievers; that the Doctrine of the Goſpel, was not agreeable to their *Reaſon* and *Philoſophy*, to the Wiſdom and Knowledge of thoſe Times. To which the Apoſtle replies; by ſhowing that the Religion of Chriſt, which they eſteemed as *Fooliſhneſs*, was really on the contrary infinitely *Wiſer and more Excellent*, than any Philoſophy in the World; And that this would appear, by comparing together their reſpective *Effects: For after that, in the Wiſdom of God, the World* (ſaith he) *by Wiſdom knew not God, it pleaſed God by the Fooliſhneſs of Preaching to ſave them that believe.*

IN the Wiſdom of God; that is to ſay, by the wiſe direction of that all-ſeeing and over-ruling Providence, which brings Light out of Darkneſs, and Order out of the greateſt Confuſion; By the direction of *That* Providence, which ſees at one view through all the Periods of Time, and, in the various changes and different Ages of the World, ſo diſpoſes and conducts an infinite diverſity of Events, as that they all tend uniformly towards the accompliſhing One Great and regular Deſign of the Supreme Creator and Lord of all things; even in the ſame manner as the looſe materials of a Building, which ſeem ſingly to have no ſimilitude, no aptneſs or proportion to each other, yet when put together in their proper places by the direction of a skilful Architect, unite all into one regular and proportionate Structure: Through the direction, ſays the Apoſtle, of This *All-Wiſe* and unerring Providence, it came to paſs, that when *the World by Wiſdom knew not God*; *by Wiſdom*, that is, by their *own* Wiſdom, the Wiſdom of *Men*, the Reaſoning and Philoſophy of the Age, the Method and Art of Diſputing, which was then looked upon as the greateſt Knowledge, and which, among the Vulgar, gave men the higheſt reputation for Wiſdom; When by *This* Wiſdom they *knew not God*; The meaning is, not, *were wholly ignorant of him*, (for that was impoſſible;) but, when they knew him not *aright*; when, (as the Apoſtle elſewhere expreſſes it,) notwithſtanding *they knew God*, yet *they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their fooliſh heart was darkned: And they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beaſts, and creeping things*: (For ſo we find in Scripture-phraſe, that *not* knowing *God*, ſignified, not *honouring* him according to our knowledge; *He that loveth not*, knoweth *not God*; 1 Joh. iv. 8. *The Gentiles which* know *not God*; 1 Th. iv. 5. And, our Lord ſhall come *in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that* know *not God, and obey not the Goſpel*; 2 Th. i. 8. And thus all wicked men, *Jews* and *Chriſtians*, as well as profeſſed *Infidels*, are by a like expreſſion frequently in Scripture ſtiled *Unbelievers*, upon account of their Diſobedience, *Heb.* iii. 12, 19; becauſe All *Men*, as they are reaſonable Creatures, are *preſumed* always to *act* according to what they *believe*:) When therefore, I ſay, this was the ſtate of Mankind; and it appeared that by all their Philoſophy and great pretences to *Wiſdom*, they did by no means attain to a right and practical Knowledge of God; when by *this Wiſdom* the World knew not God; *then* did it *pleaſe God* by *the Fooliſhneſs of Preaching*, that is, by a plain and unartificial Doctrine, by the Teaching and Exhortations of pious and unlearned Men, by a Simplicity of Inſtruction, (which, to men brought up in the Art of Diſputing, ſeemed to be Weakneſs and Fooliſhneſs, to be

a Method which could by no means have any conſiderable Effect in the World;) by *This Fooliſhneſs of Preaching* did it *pleaſe God* to *ſave*, that is, to *deliver*, from the Darkneſs of Ignorance and endleſs Diſputes, from the ſlavery of Vice and moſt deteſtable Idolatry, from the Terrours of Conſcience, from the Fears of Death, and from the final Wrath of God, from theſe Evils did it pleaſe God to ſave, *them that Believe*; The Meaning is, not the weak and credulous, men eaſy to be impoſed upon and deceived, as Unbelievers profanely deſcribed them; but Perſons of meek and humble Diſpoſitions, teachable and willing to be inſtructed, free from obſtinate and unreaſonable Prejudices, capable of being reformed, and of being perſwaded to forſake their Vices: In a word, ſuch Perſons as the Scripture deſcribes, when it tells us that " if any man *will do* his Will, he ſhall " know of the doctrine whether it be of God; St. John vii. 17: *That* the *Meek* " will God guide in judgment, and ſuch as are *gentle*, them will he teach his " way; Pſ. xxv. 9: *That* the Secret of the Lord, is with them that *fear* him, " and he will ſhew them his covenant; ver. 14: *That* Myſteries are revealed " unto the *Meek*; " Eccluſ. iii. 19: That the *good ground* which brought forth much fruit, are they which *in an honeſt and good heart* receive the Word of God, and keep it. Theſe are *they that Believe*; Theſe are the Perſons who are *ſaved*, by *the Fooliſhneſs of Preaching*; they are the ſame, whom our Saviour ſpeaks of in his Prayer, St. Luke x. 21; " I thank thee, O Father, Lord of " Heaven and Earth, that thou haſt hid theſe things from the Wiſe and Pru" dent, and haſt revealed them unto Babes; Even ſo, Father; for ſo it ſeemed " good in thy ſight. *Words very near equivalent to the Expreſſions in the Text:* " After that, in the Wiſdom of God, the world by Wiſdom knew not God, it " pleaſed God by the Fooliſhneſs of Preaching to ſave them that Believe: " After it appeared that the World by their *Humane* Wiſdom, in the Ages of Ignorance and Corruption, could not attain to a right Knowledge of God, and of the manner of worſhipping him acceptably; it pleaſed the *Divine* Wiſdom of Providence, by a Method which They accounted Fooliſhneſs, but which by the Effects appeared to be infinitely Wiſer than all the Philoſophy in the World, it pleaſed God by *This* Method to bring to Salvation ſuch as were ſincerely diſpoſed to embrace and practiſe the Truth.

SERM LV.

From the Words thus explained, there naturally ariſe the following Propoſitions.

1ſt; That God originally indued men with natural Capacities, with Faculties, and Abilities of Knowing him; in the Uſe of which Faculties after a right manner, and before they had corrupted themſelves, conſiſted the true Wiſdom and Excellency of Man. *The World by Wiſdom.*

2dly; That, notwithſtanding this original Fitneſs of mens natural Faculties and Capacities to ſearch after and apprehend God; yet in Fact, through a great and general Corruption, they did not attain to right Knowledge of him in any conſiderable Degree. *The World by Wiſdom* knew not *God.*

3dly; That, when the Inſufficiency of *Humane* Wiſdom had thus abundantly appeared; it pleaſed the *Divine* Wiſdom to manifeſt himſelf clearly to the World by *another* Method, which *they* accounted Fooliſhneſs, even by the Preaching of the Goſpel of Chriſt. *It pleaſed God by the* Fooliſhneſs *of Preaching, to bring men to Salvation.*

4thly; That the Perſons, for whoſe Conviction this Manifeſtation of God by the Goſpel was peculiarly deſigned and adapted, were not the cunning and contentious Diſputers of the World, but meek and humble and well-diſpoſed Perſons. It was *to ſave them that* believe.

Laſtly; That in this whole Diſpenſation of Providence, which the Unbelieving World looked upon as *Fooliſhneſs*, the infinite *Wiſdom* of God has in reality moſt illuſtriouſly appeared. " After that, in the Wiſdom of God, the " World by Wiſdom knew not God, it pleaſed God by the Fooliſhneſs of " Preaching to ſave them that believe."

I. *Firſt*; The Text ſuppoſes, that God did originally endue men with natural Capacities, with Faculties, and Abilities of Knowing him; in the Uſe of

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which Faculties after a right manner, and before they had corrupted themſelves, conſiſted the true Wiſdom and Excellency of Man. This is implied here in the Uſe of the Term *Wiſdom*; The *World by Wiſdom*: And in the Suppoſition upon which the ſame Apoſtle St. *Paul* always argues in *other* parallel places of his Epiſtles; namely, that the Heathen World were very blameable and juſtly condemned, for not attaining, by the uſe of their natural Faculties, to a right Knowledge of God. "For this cauſe, *ſays he*, God gave them up unto vile "affections; Rom. i. 26: *And they* received in themſelves that recompence of "their errour which was meet; ver 27: *And* God gave them over to a repro-"bate mind, to do thoſe things which are not convenient; ver. 28: *And* the "wrath of God is revealed from Heaven againſt all *their* ungodlineſs and un-"righteouſneſs; ver. 18. *Why? For* this *reaſon*, *Becauſe* they held the Truth "in unrighteouſneſs; ver. 18: *Becauſe that* when they knew God, they glorifi-"ed him not as God; ver. 21: *Becauſe* they changed the Truth of God into "a Lye; ver. 25: *And becauſe* they did not *like* to retain God in their Know-"ledge; ver. 28." All which Reproofs neceſſarily ſuppoſed, that, by the uſe of their natural Faculties, they might and ought to have known God: And indeed this is affirmed in expreſs words by the Apoſtle, ver. 19; "*For* that "which may be known of God, is manifeſt in them; for God has ſhewed it "unto them——So that they are without excuſe." And the ſame Apoſtle, Acts xvii. 22; reproving the *Athenians* for being *in all things too ſuperſtitious* and ignorant of God, does it upon this Argument, ver. 27; that God *is not far from every one of us, for in him we live, and move, and have our Being*. The *Works* of God, are manifeſt to all men; and God has endued all men with Reaſon and Underſtanding, from the Contemplation of thoſe Works, to diſcover the Wiſdom and Glory of their Maker. The Excellency of the Mind of Man *itſelf*, when it looks no further than upon its *own* nature, and conſiders only its *own* inward Capacities and wonderful Faculties; ſufficiently diſcovers how great muſt be the Author of ſo admirable a Workmanſhip, and what exalted Notions we ought to frame of Him who *made* ſo noble a Being. *Foraſmuch as we are the offſpring of God*, argues St. *Paul* in his diſcourſe to the *Athenians*, now-mentioned, Acts xvii. 29; *we ought not to think that the* Godhead, the Author and Creator of a Being endued with ſuch excellent Faculties as the Mind of Man is, ſhould himſelf *be like unto* things of a ſtill far inferiour nature, *like unto gold, or ſilver, or ſtone graven by art and man's device*. A rational Creature, that is *itſelf* endued with Underſtanding, Knowledge, and Will; cannot without extreme degeneracy and unworthineſs, imagine its Creator to be like any of the Creatures, which are of a nature far inferiour even to the Mind itſelf which thus contemplates; or that irrational Creatures, much leſs things inanimate, and the work of *Mens* hands, ſhould bear any reſemblance to, or be of any uſe as Means of Worſhip, through which to convey Honour to the Maker of all Things. There is no other Image of God in this lower World, but *the Mind* of Man, a Mind endued with Reaſon and true Virtue; And the only acceptable Worſhip, that Reaſon without the aſſiſtance of Revelation directs, is the Subjection of our Minds and Wills to him, by a Life of Virtue, Righteouſneſs, and Truth. This is the inference St *Paul* draws from the Conſideration of the Nobleneſs of *our* own *Nature*; conſidering ourſelves as the *Offſpring of God*, partakers of Reaſon, of Underſtanding, and Will; in reproof of the *Athenians* Superſtition. But then further, if we extend our Contemplation *beyond* ourſelves, to a View of the infinite and incomprehenſible Variety, the exquiſite Beauty, the wonderful Proportion and Harmony of the Works of God in the World; it will be ſtill more evident, that God has never *left himſelf* wholly *without Witneſs*, but has always afforded men ſufficient means and opportunities of knowing him. For the *Eye* is not better fitted to diſcern the *Sun* which enlightens all things, and to diſtinguiſh the Diverſity of Colours which adorn the Face of the Univerſe; than the Mind and Reaſon of Man is qualified to apprehend God by his Works, and through this noble Fabrick of the material World to diſcern the Glory of its Great Creator: Nor are the external objects of Senſe,

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more duly fitted and adapted to make ſuitable impreſſions upon their proper Organs; than the Works of God in the World, are to excite in our Minds juſt and worthy Notions of the Maker and Diſpoſer of all things. *The inviſible things of Him from the Creation of the World, are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead: ſo that they,* who are ignorant of him, *are without excuſe*; Rom. I. 20. And this is the true Notion of what we uſually call *Univerſal Conſent*, concerning the Being of God; Not that every individual perſon in the World actually attends to this Truth; (for This they do not, even in the moſt obvious and plaineſt things in nature;) but the meaning is, that every man in the uſe of his Reaſon and natural Faculties, muſt needs be *able* to diſcern the Evidences of the Being of God; that no man can miſs this great and plain Truth, but by ſuch unreaſonable prejudices or very groſs neglect, as is capable of no excuſe; and that in all times and in all places, under all circumſtances of education, reaſoning and conſidering men have unanimouſly agreed in it. And this may ſuffice for proof and explication of the *Firſt* Propoſition; *viz.* That God originally indued men with natural Capacities, with Faculties, and Abilities of Knowing him; in the Uſe of which Faculties after a right manner, and before they had corrupted themſelves, conſiſted the true Wiſdom and Excellency of Man. *The World, by Wiſdom.*

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I Should now have proceeded in the *Second* place to ſhow, that notwithſtanding this original Fitneſs of mens natural Faculties and Capacities to ſearch after and apprehend God; yet, in fact, through a great and general Corruption, Men, without the Aſſiſtance of Revelation, did not attain to a right Acknowledge of him in any conſiderable degree. *The World by Wiſdom knew not God.* But the time not permitting me to enter upon this, I ſhall only draw *One* Inference from what has been ſaid, and ſo conclude.

If therefore, (as has been ſhown,) God has originally endued men with ſuch natural Capacities, with ſuch Faculties, and Abilities of knowing him, that even in the *Heathen World* itſelf, where they had no immediate Revelation from God, yet thoſe who were ignorant of him, St. *Paul* declares to be without excuſe; how much more in a Chriſtian Country; where, beſides the Uſe of our natural Reaſon, we enjoy alſo the Benefit of the Goſpel, and the Word of God is conſtantly read and preached: How much more (I ſay) among *Us*, muſt men be utterly inexcuſable, of how mean Capacities ſoever they may be, if they continue ignorant of God, and of their Duty to him?

SERMON LVI.

The Wisdom of GOD in the Redemption of Man.

1 COR. i. 21.

For after that, in the Wisdom of God, the World by Wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of Preaching to save them that believe.

SERM. LVI.

THE Apostle in the Beginning of this Chapter reproves the *Corinthians* for their Contentions and Divisions among themselves, which were occasioned by their liking some one Teacher and some another; *One of you saith, I am of Paul*; another, *I am of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ.* To show the unreasonableness of this, he intimates, (what he more largely insists upon in the 3*d* Chapter,) that the several Apostles and Teachers sent by Christ, were *but Ministers* only, *by whom they believed, even as the Lord gave to every man*; that is, according to the divers gifts and abilities, which the Spirit of God distributed to every man severally

verally as he pleaſed, for the promoting of the Goſpel; and that therefore *neither was he that planted, any thing, neither he that watered, but God that gave the increaſe*; his meaning is, neither was the Wiſdom or Ability of one particular Teacher, or of another, of any conſiderable importance, but the Bleſſing of God only, which made the Preaching of them All effectual to Mens Converſion and Salvation. The Apoſtle, I ſay, having intimated thus much concerning the ſeveral Methods of Preaching the Goſpel, and the ſeveral Gifts and Abilities of different Apoſtles; proceeds, ver. 17, to declare concerning *himſelf* in particular, and for his *own* Juſtification, that *he* preached, *not with Wiſdom of Words, leſt the Croſs of Chriſt ſhould be made of none Effect*; that is, he did not make any affectation of humane Learning or Eloquence, leſt the Goſpel, ſhould ſeem, like the different Sects and Doctrines of Philoſophy, to depend upon nice diſputes, and upon the artful repreſentations of eloquent Speech; whereas, on the contrary, it was founded on Truth of Matter of Fact, and on the Evidence of undeniable Miracles; which Sort of Proof does not owe its advantage to the Deſcriptions of Oratory, but to the Serioufneſs and Plainneſs, to the Credibility and Integrity of thoſe who Atteſt it. This he expreſſes more fully, ch. ii. ver. 4; " My Speech and my Preaching was not " with enticing Words of Man's Wiſdom, but in Demonſtration of the Spirit " and of Power; That your Faith ſhould not ſtand in the Wiſdom of Men, " but in the Power of God. *The* Reaſon why *preaching* with the enticing Words " of Man's Wiſdom, *would have* made the Croſs of Chriſt of none effect; *he* " *adds*, ver. 18, *of the* 1ſt *chapter*; For the Preaching of the Croſs is to them " that periſh, fooliſhneſs; but unto us which are ſaved, it is the Power of " God; " The meaning is; the Doctrine of the Croſs is a doctrine of ſuch a Nature, as could not recommend itſelf by humane eloquence to the imaginations of vicious and vain Diſputants, ſuch as were moſt of the heathen Philoſophers; but to them *which are ſaved*, to ſerious and well-diſpoſed Perſons, who embrace Truth where-ever they find Evidence of it, and who are more pleaſed with what improves their minds, than with the vain Eloquence of the Heathen Oratory; to *ſuch* Perſons, the Goſpel in its greateſt Plainneſs and original Simplicity, is the *Power of God*; The *Power of God*, not to amuſe mens Underſtandings with needleſs Speculations, but to convert their Wills to Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs; " to open their eyes, and to turn them from Dark- " neſs to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God, that they may receive " forgiveneſs of Sins, and inheritance among them which are ſanctified by faith " that is in Chriſt. " In bringing about Mens Salvation by ſuch a Method as this, the Wiſdom of God, ſays the Apoſtle, appeared infinitely ſuperiour to all the Methods of humane Wiſdom: ver. 19; " For it is written, I will de- " ſtroy the Wiſdom of the Wiſe, and will bring to nothing the Underſtand- " ing of the prudent. Where is the Wiſe? Where is the Scribe? Where is " the Diſputer of this World? Hath not God made fooliſh the Wiſdom of this " World? *And then he adds in the Words of the Text*; For after that, in the " Wiſdom of God, the World by Wiſdom knew not God, it pleaſed God by " the fooliſhneſs of Preaching to ſave them that believe. "

In the Words I obſerved the following Propoſitions to be contained.

1*ſt*; That God originally indued men with natural Capacities, with Faculties, and Abilities of Knowing him; in the Uſe of which Faculties after a right manner, and before they had corrupted themſelves, conſiſted the true Wiſdom and Excellency of Man. *The World by Wiſdom.*

2*dly*; That, notwithſtanding this original Fitneſs of mens natural Faculties and Capacities to ſearch after and apprehend God; yet, in Fact, through a great and general Corruption, they did not attain to a right Knowledge of him in any conſiderable Degree. *The World by Wiſdom knew not God.*

3*dly*; That, when the Inſufficiency of *Human* Wiſdom had thus abundantly appeared; it pleaſed the *Divine* Wiſdom to manifeſt himſelf clearly to the World by *another* Method, which *they* accounted Fooliſhneſs, even by the

Preaching

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Preaching of the Goſpel of Chriſt, *It pleaſed God by the Fooliſhneſs of Preaching, to bring men to Salvation.*

4thly; That the Perſons, for whoſe Conviction this manifeſtation of God by the Goſpel was peculiarly deſigned and adapted, were not the cunning and contentious Diſputers of the World, but meek and humble and well-diſpoſed Perſons. It was *to ſave them that* believe.

Laſtly; That in this whole Diſpenſation of Providence, which the Unbelieving World looked upon as *Fooliſhneſs*, the infinite *Wiſdom* of God has in reality moſt illuſtriouſly appeared. *After that in the Wiſdom of God, the World by Wiſdom knew not God; it pleaſed God by the Fooliſhneſs of Preaching to ſave them that believe.*

The firſt of theſe Propoſitions I have already conſidered in a foregoing Diſcourſe; I proceed now in the

II. *Second* place to ſhow that notwithſtanding this original Fitneſs of mens natural Faculties and Capacities to ſearch after and apprehend God; yet, in Fact, through a great and general Corruption, men, without the Aſſiſtance of Revelation, did not attain to a right Knowledge of him in any conſiderable degree, *The World by Wiſdom knew not God:* They *knew him not*, as they might and ought to have known him: They *knew him not*, becauſe they *did not* like *to retain him in their knowledge*: They *glorified him not as God*, but ran into Idolatry and vicious practices; and this further corrupted their Notions, ſo that they *became more and more vain in their imaginations, and their fooliſh heart was darkned.* For as the *Eye*, when put out, diſcerns the Light no more, than if it had never been at all framed to be an Organ of Seeing; So when the Underſtanding is darkned by vain Imaginations, the Will biaſſed by evil Inclinations, and the Affections corrupted by vicious Practices; what wonder is it if men in a manner ceaſe to know *him*, who is the Author of all Knowledge and Underſtanding? For it is God that *teaches man knowledge*, and *the inſpiration of the Almighty giveth him Underſtanding*; Pſ. xciv. 10, and Job xxxii. 8. The Philoſophers themſelves, who ſhould have corrected the Errours of the Vulgar; even They, in thoſe very Enquiries wherein they *profeſſed themſelves to be* moſt *wiſe*, *they became Fools*; Rom. i. 22. Some Sects of them argued themſelves out of the Belief of the very Being of God, and ridiculouſly attempted to give an Account of the original formation of the World, by the accidental concourſe of ſenſeleſs Atoms: Others, profeſſing in words to believe his Being, yet by denying his Providence and Government of the World, in reality deſtroyed their own Suppoſition. Some by aſcribing all things to Chance, others to abſolute Fatality, equally ſubverted all true Notions of Religion; and made the Doctrine of the Reſurrection of the Dead and of a Future Judgment, needleſs and impoſſible. Of theſe we read, *Acts* xvii. 18; *Then certain Philoſophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoicks encountred* Paul; *and ſome ſaid, What will this babler ſay? Other ſome, he ſeemeth to be a ſetter-forth of ſtrange Gods; becauſe he preached unto them Jeſus and the Reſurrection*: And to ſome of theſe probably St. *Paul* alludes, when he warns the *Coloſſians*, ch. ii. ver. 4, 8; Beware, *leſt any man ſhould beguile you with enticing words*, and *ſpoil you through philoſophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the World, and not after Chriſt.* Further; Moſt of them allowed and encouraged the Worſhip of ſuch falſe Gods, as the Poets had firſt feigned like the moſt wicked men; and the natural conſequence of this, as well as the juſt judgment of God upon them, was, that they ſhould be given up to work all uncleanneſs and unrighteouſneſs with greedineſs; as St. *Paul* largely explains in the *iſt* chapter of his epiſtle to the *Romans*. Some profeſſed open Immorality, aſſerting ſenſual pleaſure to be the chieſeſt Good; whoſe *evil Communications* could not but of neceſſity *corrupt good manners*; *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die*; 1 Cor. xv. 33. Others by ſubtle diſtinctions patronized particular Vices, to which themſelves were moſt addicted; To whoſe doctrines perhaps St. *Paul* had regard, when he ſo often repeats that caution, and always upon the ſame Occaſion; *Be not deceived*; *Let no man deceive himſelf:*

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ſelf; *Let no man deceive you with vain words*; *Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abuſers of themſelves with mankind nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, ſhall inherit the kingdom of God.* The Better Sort of them, who were the moſt celebrated, and with the greateſt Reaſon, diſcourſed yet with much Uncertainty and Doubtfulneſs, concerning things of the higheſt and moſt univerſal importance, the Providence of God in governing the World, the Immortality of the Soul, and a Future Judgment: And, excepting two or three very eminent Perſons, who appeared ſingly in ſo many different Ages of the World, as *Lights* raiſed up by Providence to ſhine in a dark place; excepting Theſe, I ſay, the generality of the Philoſophers Diſputes even upon theſe moſt important Subjects, were managed in a Way of Pride and Vain-glory, Subtlety and Strife; ending in Nothing but Words and Empty Contention; and having little or no Influence and Authority, to amend and reform the manners of a degenerate and corrupt World: So that, upon the whole, it is no wonder, that, *by* This *Wiſdom the World knew not God.*

III. *Thirdly*; When the Inſufficiency of *Human* Wiſdom had thus abundantly appeared; it pleaſed the *Divine* Wiſdom to manifeſt himſelf clearly to the World by another Method, which *They* accounted Fooliſhneſs, even by the Preaching of the Goſpel of Chriſt. *It pleaſed God by the Fooliſhneſs of Preaching to bring men to Salvation.* Thoſe great Ends, which the Wiſdom of the World was ſo far from being able to accompliſh, that on the contrary, under the ſpecious Title of Wiſdom, it appeared in reality to be little better than mere Folly, and altogether ineffectual; Thoſe great Ends, (I ſay,) of delivering mankind from Superſtition and Ignorance, from Sin and Miſery, has the Wiſdom of God effectually brought about by the Preaching of That Doctrine, which the Wiſdom of the World eſteemed as Fooliſhneſs; *Fooliſhneſs* they thought it to be, in reſpect of the *Doctrine* itſelf; which they looked upon as incredible; that God ſhould ſend his Son into the World, to die for the Sins of Men, to riſe again for their Juſtification, and to be himſelf their Judge at the general Reſurrection: *Fooliſhneſs* in reſpect of the *Perſons*, by whom it was taught; a crucified Maſter, mean and unlearned Diſciples; *Fooliſhneſs* in reſpect of the *Manner* of its propagation; with all Plainneſs and Simplicity, without eloquence, without oratory, without any of the enticing words of man's Wiſdom: Yet in event, which is the true Juſtification of Wiſdom; what the pretended Wiſdom of Men was infinitely inſufficient to effect, *This Fooliſhneſs* of Preaching actually has accompliſhed: By this has been diſpelled that univerſal *Ignorance and Superſtition* which overſpread the whole World; and all men Now *do* or eaſily *may* come to the Knowledge and Worſhip of the One only true God of Nature, and Lord of the whole Univerſe. By *This*, innumerable Perſons of all Capacities, have been prevailed upon and enabled to live in the Practice of all *Purity*, *Holineſs*, *and Righteouſneſs*, far beyond the Examples of the moſt Celebrated Philoſophers: By *This* have been diſcovered the only true means of finding Comfort againſt the *Fear of Death*, againſt the Evil of paſt Sins, againſt the *Terrours of Conſcience* and *Apprehenſions of the righteous Judgment of God*: Laſtly, By *This* only, has been made clear and manifeſt *Immortality* and *Eternal Life*, the Happineſs of Heaven and the certain Means of attaining it. By *This Fooliſhneſs of Preaching* has it *pleaſed God* to bring Men to *Salvation.*

IV. *Fourthly*; Here is an Account of the *Perſons*, for whoſe conviction this Manifeſtation of God by the Goſpel was peculiarly deſigned and adapted; namely, that they are, not the artful and contentious Diſputers of the World, but meek and humble and well-diſpoſed Perſons; It was *to ſave them that* Believe. *Them that Believe*; That is, ſuch as *embrace*, and are willing to obey the Doctrine of Chriſt; Perſons *teachable and well diſpoſed*, capable of Inſtruction, free from obſtinate and unreaſonable prejudices, willing and deſirous to know and to obey the Will of God; Perſons either not engaged in any vicious Habits, or at leaſt capable of being reformed, and reclaimed from their Errours,

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rours, upon due conviction. Such Perſons as the Scripture elſewhere deſcribes to be *ordained to eternal Life*, Acts xiii. 48; the word ſignifies properly, not *ordained*, but *prepared*, *diſpoſed*, *or well qualified* to receive the Doctrine of Chriſt's Kingdom. Such as our Saviour calls his *Sheep* that will *hear his voice*, St. Joh. x. 27. The Meaning is, that, however they may at preſent wander in errours, and poſſibly in ſome inſtances of wickedneſs, yet they are ſuch as have in them a Root or Principle of Meekneſs and good Diſpoſition, by which they may ſome time be recovered: Such, of whom he elſewhere affirms that *his Father draws* them, or elſe they *could not come unto him*, St. Joh. vi. 44; that is, they have a general Diſpoſition to *do the Will of God*, which cauſes them to judge rightly *of Chriſt's particular doctrine*, and to perceive *that it is of God*: Theſe are *they that believe*: Perſons of a Temper directly contrary to that of the Phariſees; and others both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, the ground of whoſe rejecting the Goſpel, was not any want of reaſonable Evidence, but this only, that they *loved Darkneſs rather than Light*, *becauſe their deeds were evil*; St. Joh. iii. 19; and *believed not the Truth*, becauſe they had pleaſure *in unrighteouſneſs*, 2 Theſſalonians ii. 12. This Phraſe, therefore, *They that believe*, does not ſignify *the Credulous*, and men eaſy to be impoſed upon; as the Profane World were apt to upbraid them; (For, on the contrary, we find in Scripture that the *Bereans* were commended for ſearching *the Scriptures daily*, *whether thoſe things were ſo*, before they believed the Teſtimony even of the Apoſtles themſelves, *Acts* xvii. 11; and our Saviour himſelf was willing that St. *Thomas*'s doubt ſhould be ſatisfied by no leſs an Evidence than that of his own Senſes; *Joh.* xx. 27;) But, *to believe*, ſignifies to ſubmit to reaſonable evidence; in oppoſition to thoſe, who *caſt God's words behind them* for no other Reaſon, but becauſe *they hate to be reformed*. And *This* good Diſpoſition, as it naturally prepares Men to receive the Truth in the Love of it, becauſe it furniſhes them before-hand with righter Notions of Divine things, and cauſes them to examine Things, and enquire after Truth with more impartiality; So it is very juſt with God, and very agreeable to the Method of Providence, that *ſuch Perſons only* ſhould have the full means of Conviction allowed them, while the reſt by their own negligence and wickedneſs are *blinded*.

V. *Fifthly* and *Laſtly*; In this Whole Diſpenſation of the Goſpel, which the Unbelieving World looked upon as *Fooliſhneſs*, the infinite *Wiſdom* of God has in reality moſt illuſtriouſly appeared. *After that, in the Wiſdom of God, the World by Wiſdom knew not God, it pleaſed God by the Fooliſhneſs of Preaching to ſave them that believe.* Wiſdom conſiſts, in accompliſhing the moſt excellent *Deſigns*, and that in the beſt and propereſt *Manner*, but often by the moſt unlikely *Perſons and Means*. Now in *each* of theſe reſpects, has the Wiſdom of God moſt illuſtriouſly manifeſted it ſelf in the Goſpel. With regard to the *Manner* of its propagation, it was Wiſe and Fit that That Doctrine, which was to be an Univerſal Law and Rule of Life to men of all Capacities, and the condition of their Salvation; ſhould be delivered with all plainneſs and Simplicity; *not with enticing words of man's Wiſdom, but in Demonſtration of the Spirit and of Power*; 1 Cor. ii. 4: For want of attending to which; as the *Jews*, by eſtabliſhing their own righteouſneſs, the Traditions and Ceremonies of *Men*, attained not to the righteouſneſs which is of God; ſo the *Gentiles*, by adhering to their own Wiſdom, the Philoſophy of *humane* Invention, fell ſhort of that Wiſdom, which was alone Divine. With regard to the *Meanneſs of the Perſons*, and *Weakneſs of the Inſtruments* by which the Goſpel was planted, the Wiſdom of God appeared in *deſtroying the wiſdom of the wiſe*, *and bringing to Nothing the Underſtanding of the Prudent*; in *chuſing the fooliſh things of the World to confound the Wiſe*, *and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty*; *and baſe things of the world*, *and things that are deſpiſed*, *yea*, *and things which are not*, *to bring to nought things that are*: *That no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence*; 1 Cor. i. 19, 27. Laſtly, in reſpect of the *Doctrine itſelf*, it was *wiſe* to vindicate the Juſtice of God and the Honour of his Laws and Government, and to ſhow his irreconcileable

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Hatred againſt Sin, by refuſing to pardon it upon any eaſier Terms, than the Death of his Son: It was *Wiſe* to manifeſt at the ſame time, and in a conſiſtent manner, his Mercy and Compaſſion towards Sinners, in ſo loving the World, as to *ſend* his *only Son* to die for that end, that *in him*, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, "we might have redemption through his blood, even the forgive-"neſs of Sins, according to the riches of his Grace, wherein he has abound-"ed towards us in all Wiſdom and Prudence; Eph. i. 7, 8. It was *Wiſe* to ſhow the abſolute Neceſſity of Repentance, and the Impoſſibility of Pardon without it; and at the ſame time to give effectual Encouragement to ſuch as are truly Penitent, and to inſtruct and aſſiſt them in the future Performance of their Duty, by the greateſt Example, by the plaineſt Precepts, by the cleareſt diſcovery of a Judgment to come, and by the powerful aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God. In theſe, and numberleſs other reſpects, which no Tongue can worthily deſcribe, ſo *Wiſe* is the Doctrine of the Goſpel, that thereby not only all Men may *ſee, what is the fellowſhip of the Myſtery which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jeſus Chriſt*; but even to the higheſt Angels alſo, *to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, may be known by the Church the manifold Wiſdom of God*; Eph. iii. 9.

I ſhall but juſt mention an Inference or two from what has been ſaid, and ſo conclude. And

1ſt; If that Knowledge of God, which by the Wiſdom of the World could never be attained to, was by the Simplicity and plain Inſtruction of the Goſpel, ſpread among men effectually and to Salvation; it follows, that, for the ſame reaſon, we ought always to adhere conſtantly to the Simplicity and Purity of the ſame doctrine, as delivered by Chriſt and his Apoſtles; laying as little ſtreſs as poſſible, upon any additional Doctrines or Explications of human Wiſdom. In which regard, the Church of *Rome* has been *principally*, and *All* who *in Any degree* follow their Example, have been *proportionably* to blame, when, like the *Phariſees* of old, they make void the Commandments of God, by the Doctrines and Traditions of Men. Directly contrary to the example of St. *Paul*; who, notwithſtanding his Apoſtolical Authority, yet taught nothing but what he had learnt of Chriſt; and his "rejoicing was this, the teſtimony of *his* Con-"ſcience, *that* in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with fleſhly Wiſdom, "but by the Grace of God, *he* had had *his* converſation in the World; 2 Cor. "i. 12. *And whoſe advice it is*, 1 Cor. iii. 18; *that* if any man will be wiſe "in this World, let him become a Fool, that he may be Wiſe;" That is, not, let him do any thing fooliſhly *indeed*; but by adhering to That, which weak men falſely eſteem fooliſh, let him ſhow himſelf to be really and truly wiſe.

2dly; If the Perſons, for whoſe Conviction the Goſpel was peculiarly deſigned and adapted, were not the contentious Diſputers of the World, but the meek and humble and well-diſpoſed; then, whoever pretends to be diſſatisfied with the Evidences of the Goſpel, and to expect further proof, is indiſpenſably obliged before all things to attain this good diſpoſition, to live up to the moral rules of Reaſon and natural Religion, and to ſhow himſelf willing and deſirous to obey the Will of God, in all caſes wherein it is manifeſted unto him; and then he *ſhall* know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God. Which whilſt All Libertines and Profane Perſons openly neglect, they plainly fall under the Condemnation of thoſe *who love darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their deeds are evil*; and whoſe *Eyes* therefore it is very juſt with God to ſhut that they ſhould *not ſee*, and their *Ears* that they ſhould *not hear*.

Laſtly; If the Wiſdom of God has already moſt illuſtriouſly appeared in the *firſt* Propagation of the Goſpel, contrary to the Expectation both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*; then ought we in the practice of our plain Duty to depend upon the Wiſdom of the ſame Providence to bring about what *ſtill* remains to be accompliſhed, notwithſtanding that *we* are not able perhaps to diſcern the Means of doing it. For as in the Conſtitution of the *natural* World, the greateſt number of Effects are produced by ſuch Cauſes, whoſe Efficiency and Manner of Operation

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Operation we cannot diſcover; ſo is it likewiſe in God's Government of the *moral* World by his Providence. The Scripture ſeems in many places to intimate, that there is ſtill a Time to come, when the Goſpel ſhall be more univerſally embraced and more uniformly practiſed, than it has ever yet been. To the fulfilling theſe Predictions, *we* can contribute nothing by any Deſigns of human Wiſdom, any otherwiſe than by continuing ſtedfaſt in the Practice of our plain Duty with Simplicity and Sincerity of Heart, expecting with Patience, and depending upon the Wiſdom of Providence to accompliſh That Time, when *the Earth ſhall be filled with the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea.* And when we ſhall find reaſon to cry out, as St. *Paul* did upon Occaſion of the manner of the firſt Propagation of the Goſpel, *Rom.* xi. 33; *O the depth of the Riches both of the Knowledge and Wiſdom of God; how unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!*

SERMON

SERMON LVII.

Of the Hopes of Happineſs through CHRIST.

TIT. i. 2, 3.

In hope of eternal Life, which God that cannot lie, promiſed before the World began; But hath in due Times manifeſted his Word through Preaching, which is committed unto Me, according to the Commandment of God our Saviour.

THE whole Sentence, of which theſe words are a part, runs thus: *According to the Faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the Truth which is after Godlineſs; In Hope of eternal Life, which God that cannot lie, promiſed,* &c. SERM. LVII.

I. The *Firſt* thing therefore obſervable in the Text, is this Great and Fundamental Doctrine of Chriſtian Religion; that, in the Revelation of the Goſpel, God has given us an aſſured *Hope of eternal Life*, to be obtained by our *Acknowledging of the Truth which is after Godlineſs*. By the Light of *Nature*, we know certainly the eſſential, the eternal and unalterable Difference of *Good and Evil*. By the ſame Light of *Nature*, we know alſo demonſtratively, (though the greateſt part of the Heathen World, as St.

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Paul obſerves, *did not like to retain* this *Knowledge*: But by the Light of *Nature*, I ſay, we *may* know demonſtrably) the *Being* of a Supreme Author and Governour of the Univerſe: *For the inviſible things of God from the creation of the World are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made*; Rom. i. 20. That this Great Creator and Supreme Lord of the Univerſe, cannot but ſee and know things to be what they are; cannot but diſcern and judge, in the moſt perfect and unerring manner, Good to be Good, and Evil to be Evil; cannot but approve the one, and be diſpleaſed with the other; and conſequently cannot but at ſome time or other, and in ſome manner or other, in ſuch way as to his infinite Wiſdom ſhall ſeem fitteſt, manifeſt his Favour towards the one, and his Diſpleaſure againſt the other; This alſo is as evident to *natural Reaſon*, as it is evident that *Fire* muſt give *Heat*, or that *Light* cannot be *Darkneſs*. For, the *Effects* of the *neceſſary* operations of *inanimate Cauſes*, are not more clearly connected with their reſpective *Natures*; than the *Effects* of the *Free* operation of *unerring Wiſdom*, may be depended upon that they will be ſuitable to the *Nature* of *Wiſdom* and *True Diſcernment*. In *general* therefore, that God will finally *reward Virtue* and *puniſh Vice*, ſtands upon the ſame foot of *Certainty* in *natural Reaſon*, as the Proof of the *Being* itſelf, and of the *Government* of *God*. But *in particular*, what *Degrees* or what *Duration* of *Reward* or of *Puniſhment* God has appointed to either, cannot be known without *Revelation*. And ſtill much more, with regard to *Sinners*, upon *what Terms* God will accept *Repentance*, and from *what kind* of Offenders, and to what *Effects*, and *Purpoſes*, and *Degrees* of reconciliation he will accept it; cannot, with any *ſatisfactory certainty*, be diſcovered otherwiſe than by *Revelation*. In *natural* conſequence of *Reaſon*, the *Wages of Sin is Death*; and *That*, attended with ſuch Circumſtances and ſuch Duration of Puniſhment, as ſhall to the Righteous Judge of the whole Earth ſeem meet. But *eternal Life*, is the free *Gift of God*; in *no* conſequence of Reaſon due *naturally*, as a Claim of *Right*, even to *innocent* and *ſinleſs* Creatures. It is God's *mere good pleaſure* to give *Being* to any Creatures at all, and to *continue* them in Being for what Space of time he ſees fit, in a State ſuitable to the Capacities of their ſeveral Natures, and in degrees of Happineſs proportionable to their Moral Improvements. But when they *have done all that is their duty to do*, this gives them *no Right* to *Immortality*, nor to any *other State* or *Degree* of *Happineſs*, than what they were qualified for by the original capacity of their reſpective Natures. If Men had *never Sinned*, yet they would have had *no Claim*, in point of *Juſtice*, to be made *equal to the Angels*. Much leſs does the *Repentance of* Sinners, put God under any Obligation to beſtow upon them a *Bleſſed Immortality*. The *Hope of eternal Life* therefore, both as to the *Duration* and as to the *Greatneſs* of the Happineſs expreſſed in that Phraſe, is, to *Us* in our *preſent* Circumſtances, founded wholly upon the *Promiſe* of God in Chriſt. God has given unto Chriſt a Kingdom: And *I*, ſays our Lord to his Diſciples, *appoint unto You a Kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto Me*; Luke xxii. 29. The *Means* whereby, or the *Conditions* upon which, this *eternal Life* is to be obtained by us; are our *embracing* and *profeſſing* the Doctrine of the Goſpel, ſo as to bring forth the Fruits of it in *righteous Practice*, in the courſe of a *virtuous* and religious *Life*. This is what the Apoſtle here ſtiles "the Faith of God's Elect, and the acknowledging of the Truth which "is after Godlineſs." It is called *Truth*, by way of eminence; as being, in point of *Evidence* and *Reality*, diſtinguiſhed from the *Lying* Vanities of Idolatry and Superſtition; and, in point of *Plainneſs* and *Simplicity*, from the uncertain and contentious Doctrines wherewith it was foreſeen that it would in time be corrupted. And becauſe men are extremely apt to value themſelves upon a *right Profeſſion*; and deſirous, inſtead of *governing their Paſſions* and *forſaking their Vices*, to build up to themſelves a Hope of Salvation upon *Any* other *Terms*, and to make an Exchange with God by *Any Commutation*; therefore the Scripture, in order to prevent this fatal and extenſive Deceit, has been exceedingly careful, always ſo to join together *Truth* and *Godlineſs*, as to ſhow

Rom. vi. 23.

Luk. xx. 36.

that

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that *no Profeſſion of Religion whatſoever* is of Any Advantage, any further than it influences men by its *Obligations* and by its *Motives*, to the practice of *Righteouſneſs* and true *Virtue*. Hence in the *Old Teſtament*, the Commandments God gave to the *Jews*, are called *The Law of Truth*, —— *turning many away from iniquity*; Mal. ii. 6. And hence in the *New Teſtament*, the *Goſpel* or *Doctrine* of *Chriſt*, is ſtiled, in the words before my Text, *the Truth which is after Godlineſs*. And, 1 *Tim.* vi. 3; "the Doctrine which is according to Godli-"neſs. *In* 2 Th. ii. 13; *it is* Sanctification of the Spirit, and Belief of the "Truth, through *which* God hath from the Beginning choſen us to Salvati-"on. *In* Tit. ii. 11; *it is* the Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, *by* "teaching us, that denying Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, we ſhould live ſo-"berly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World." And for the ſame reaſon, mens *rejecting* the Goſpel, is expreſſed, 2 *Th.* ii. 12, by their *not receiving the Love of the Truth*, and *not believing the Truth*, but *having pleaſure in Unrighteouſneſs*. And their *not* living anſwerably to the *Knowledge* they have of God's Will, is called *Holding the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs*; and, *not obeying the Truth*, but *obeying Unrighteouſneſs*; Rom. i. 18; and ii. 8. This therefore is the *Firſt Particular* obſervable in my Text, namely, this Great and Fundamental Doctrine of Chriſtian Religion; that, in the Revelation of the Goſpel, God has given us an aſſured *Hope of eternal Life*, to be obtained by our *Acknowledging of the Truth which is after Godlineſs*.

II. It is obſervable in the *Second* place, that this *Hope of eternal Life, promiſed* by *God* through Chriſt to All who truly repent, being founded entirely upon the gracious *forgiveneſs of Sin*, and being conſequently a *Deliverance* of Sinners from the Wrath of God; is therefore in Scripture uſually and very properly ſtiled *Salvation*. And that, upon This Account; as *Chriſt*, who was the Propitiation for our Sins, is, in a ſenſe peculiar to *Himſelf*, frequently ſtiled *Our Saviour*; ſo *the God and Father of All*, (who originally *ſo loved the World*, as to *give his only begotten Son* in this manner for our Salvation,) is, in a Senſe peculiar to *Himſelf* likewiſe, ſtiled in the Text *Our Saviour*. The *Preaching* of This Doctrine, ſaith the Apoſtle, was *committed unto Me, according to the Commandment of GOD our Saviour*; That is, by the Command of *Him*, who, before the World began, *promiſed* to bring us, through his Mercy in Chriſt, to a *Hope of eternal Life*. The like manner of expreſſion is uſed by the ſame Apoſtle; Gal. i. 4; "Chriſt gave himſelf for our Sins, that he might deliver us from "this preſent evil World, according to the Will of GOD, even our Father. "*And*, 1 *Tim.* i. 1; By the Commandment of GOD our Saviour, and (*by* "*the Commandment of our*) Lord Jeſus Chriſt. *Again*, ch. ii. 3, 5; This is "good and acceptable in the ſight of GOD our Saviour; —— For there is One "God, and One Mediator between God and men, the man Chriſt Jeſus, *And* "ch. iv. 10; We truſt in the living GOD, who is the Saviour of all men." Thus likewiſe in this Epiſtle to *Titus*, beſides the Inſtance of my *Text*, there are *two other* Paſſages, wherein the ſame notion is expreſſed with great diſtinctneſs. Ch. ii. 10; *That they may adorn the Doctrine of GOD our Saviour*; —— it follows immediately in the next ſentence, —— *and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*; ver. 13. And ch. iii. 4, 6; *The Kindneſs and Love of GOD our Saviour*; —— *which he ſhed on us abundantly, through Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour*. The Meaning of the Apoſtle in theſe expreſſions, is as evident as poſſible. *GOD* is *our Saviour*, in the ſenſe that He who *Accepts the Sacrifice* as an Atonement for the Sins of thoſe who truly repent, is the Author of their Salvation: And *Chriſt* is *our Saviour* in the ſenſe wherein *the Sacrifice itſelf* ſaves us. In which ſenſe, *He* alſo is by St. *Paul* ſtiled "The Author of eternal Salvation; *Heb.* v. 8, 9; *Having* learn-"ed Obedience (*ſays he*) by the things which he ſuffered, and being made per-"fect, he became the Author of eternal Salvation unto all them that obey him." Whoſoever has not obſerved this diſtinction, ſo expreſsly and ſo ſollicitouſly inculcated by the Apoſtle; will find, upon conſideration, that he has read or heard the Scriptures, with too little Care and Attention.

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III. A *Third* Particular obſervable in my Text, is, that This Great Salvation, this *Hope of eternal Life* upon the gracious Terms and Conditions of the Goſpel, is aſſured to us by the conſideration of the *Veracity* and *Immutability* of God: *Which God, that cannot Lie*, hath *promiſed*. Thus again, 2 *Tim.* ii. 13; *He cannot deny himſelf*: And *Heb.* vi. 18; *That by two immutable things, in which it was impoſſible for God to lie, we might have a ſtrong Conſolation.*

What I would principally obſerve upon This Head, is; that the word, *cannot*, in theſe and the like expreſſions, does not ſignify *cannot* in point of *Power*, as if a Falſehood was not as *eaſily* affirmed as a Truth; or as if any of God's *Actions* were *neceſſary*, in like manner as his *eternal* and *omnipreſent Being*, or *Knowledge* is *neceſſary*: But the Meaning is, that, conſiſtently with his *character* he *cannot*, conſiſtently with his *Goodneſs*, conſiſtently with his *Perfections*, he *cannot*, either *impoſe* upon his Creatures, or *do* or *require to be done* any thing that is *Evil*. The like manner of ſpeaking we meet with, *Mark* vi. 5; (compared with *Matt.* xiii. 58;) *Jeſus* could *do no mighty Works in his Own Country, becauſe of their Unbelief*. And *Gen.* xix. 22; God ſays to *Lot*; *Haſte thee, eſcape thither*; *for I* Cannot *do any thing, till thou be come thither*. Evidently, not for want of *Power*; But, conſiſtently with his preſent *Purpoſes and Deſigns*, conſiſtently with his *Rule and Method* of acting, he *could not* do theſe things.

This compleating of the Sentence by ſupplying ſuch words as the *Senſe* neceſſarily requires, is what all men always do in *common Speech*, and ſeldom or never *miſtake* in ſo doing. But in reading of *Scripture*, men are much more apt either *negligently* or *ſuperſtitiouſly*, to content themſelves with the *bare Words*, without attending to the *Senſe* and *Scope* of the Writer; and by that means have founded *unintelligible Opinions*, upon Texts whoſe real Meaning is both *rational* and indeed *obvious*.

For inſtance: When God declares in Scripture, *I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy*; Rom. ix. 15; the words neceſſarily to be ſupplied, in order to compleat the Senſe, are; not, that he *will* do ſo, by *arbitrary Appointment*; but that he *will* do ſo, by his *righteous and unerring Judgment*.

In like manner, when the Scripture declares that we are *juſtified by Faith*, or *ſaved* by Faith; the Intent and Meaning of the Expreſſion is as certain, that *Faith*, ſaves us, not *of itſelf*, but by being in us a Principle and Foundation of *Virtue*, and by producing in us the Fruits of *Righteous Practice*; as it is certain that a *Fruit-tree feeds* or *nouriſhes* a man, not by the *Wood* it conſiſts of, but by the *Fruit* it bears. And therefore the ſame Scripture affirms, not only that we are *juſtified* by Faith, but likewiſe that we are *ſanctified* by Faith, *Acts* xxvi. 18; and not only that we are ſaved by *Faith*, but alſo that we are ſaved by *Grace*, Eph. ii. 5; and ſaved by *Hope*, Rom. viii. 24; and ſaved by *the Goſpel*, 1 Cor. xv. 2; and by every thing that can be an effectual Root or Ground of *Virtue*.

Again: When we read in Scripture, of God's *hardening mens Hearts*; and concerning the *Iſraelites particularly*, that notwithſtanding all the Miracles God had worked in their ſight, *yet he had not given them an heart to perceive, and eyes to ſee, and ears to hear*; Deut. xxix. 4: Whoſoever conſiders all the Parts diſtinctly, which compleat and fill up the entire Sentence, will wonder how any one can avoid ſeeing, that God *hardens mens Hearts*, not *by* the influence of his *Power*, not *by* the operation of his *Will* and *Intention*, but *by* thoſe very *Means*, which were deſigned for their *Converſion*, producing in them a *contrary Effect*. God worked numerous Miracles in the Sight of the *Iſraelities* in the Wilderneſs, in order to their Conviction, and to bring them to a ſenſe of their Duty, he uſed Means proper, and abundantly ſufficient to That Purpoſe: And yet by all thoſe Methods, *he produced* in them no true Underſtanding; but on the contrary *he made them* even *worſe*, and more obſtinate than they were before. Did ever any man miſtake the Senſe of ſuch Expreſſions as theſe, when ſpoken of an *Earthly Prince* or *Parent*, of an *Earthly Benefactor* or *Friend*? By repeated Acts of *Goodneſs* and *Compaſſion*, by numberleſs Inſtances of *Kindneſs* and *good Treatment*, by the moſt *condeſcending Intreaties* and by the moſt *affectionate Perſwaſions*;

Perſwaſions; he has *made* a *rebellious Subject*, a *diſobedient Child*, an *ungrateful Friend*, to be even *more unreaſonable* and in every reſpect *worſe* than he was before. SERM. LVII.

To give but one Inſtance more: When we read in Scripture of *Myſteries*, or things whoſe *Depth* is *unfathomable* to our imperfect Underſtandings; it is very abſurd to imagine, as if we were not to underſtand clearly *what is* the thing taught or affirmed, or were not to underſtand diſtinctly the Meaning of the Words ſpoken to us. For, in That caſe, the *Doctrine itſelf*, or the *Object of our Belief*, would be *Nothing*; Would be nothing but *empty* or *inſignificant Sounds*: As St. *Paul* has largely and affectionately argued, in the whole xivth Chapter of his 1ſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*. But the true and only Senſe and Meaning of the word, *Myſtery*, according to Scripture, is, to ſignify a Doctrine, which however *intelligible* poſſibly even to the meaneſt Capacity, *what* the *thing it ſelf* revealed to us *is*; the *Myſtery*, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *now made* Manifeſt *to the Saints*, Col. i. 26; yet the whole *Ground* and *Reaſon* of the *original* Counſel of God from the Beginning of the World, for his chuſing to proceed in ſuch or ſuch a particular manner, may be ſtill (and perhaps for ever) *inſcrutable* both to Men and Angels: *For Who hath known the Mind of the Lord? Or Who hath been his Counſellor?* Rom. xi. 34. A remarkable Inſtance of which matter, is That Aſſertion of the Apoſtle, which I would take notice of, as

IV. The *Fourth* and *Laſt* Particular obſervable in my Text; namely, that the *Hope of eternal Life* revealed in the Goſpel, is what *God promiſed before the World began, but hath in due times manifeſted his Word* through Preaching. *Known unto God are all his Works, from the Beginning of the World*; Acts xv. 18. The Method of his *univerſal Government* through the whole Syſtem both of the natural and moral World, is according to certain uniform Rules *eternally* eſtabliſhed by unerring Wiſdom: And every *particular Diſpenſation* of Providence, is always ſome *Deſign* of Wiſdom and Goodneſs, of Juſtice and Mercy, carried on through a long Series of connected Events, to one Great and ultimately intended View. Hence St. *Paul* begins almoſt every one of his Epiſtles, with This Doctrine; that the *Myſtery* of the Goſpel, the Method of God's diſpenſing his Mercy to Penitents, and bringing men to Salvation by Chriſt, was fore-ordained and *promiſed before the World began*: That *the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, ——*hath choſen us in Him, before the Foundation of the World*: That he *hath called us*, ——*according to his own Purpoſe and Grace, which was given us in Chriſt Jeſus before the World began.* Hence likewiſe St. *Peter* ſtiles Chriſt, 1 Pet. i. 20; *a Lamb without blemiſh*——*fore-ordained before the Foundation of the World*: And St. *John* in his *Revelation*, ch. xiii. 8; *the Lamb ſlain from the Foundation of the World.*

Tit. i. 2. 1 Cor. ii. 7. Eph. i. 3. iii. 9. Col. i. 26. 2 Tim. i 9.

And this is, indeed, the true Scripture-notion of *Predeſtination*. Not that God *abſolutely* and *unconditionately*, by an Act of *Sovereignty*, predeſtinated *particular Perſons* to Salvation; But that by an Act of *Grace and Mercy*, he predeſtinated or appointed, from the Foundation of the World, the Perſon *by whom*, and the Method *in which*, and the Conditions *in compliance with which*, Sinners might obtain Forgiveneſs and Reconciliation with God: *That in the Diſpenſation of the Fulneſs of Times, he might gather together in One all things in Chriſt, both which are in Heaven, and which are on Earth*; Eph. i. 10. And This Predeſtination indeed, is *not according to our Works*; that is, it is not what *Sinful men* could claim *Any Right* to, by virtue of any *Moral* Works, much leſs by virtue of any *Ceremonial* Works, which ſuch obnoxious Creatures were *Themſelves* able to perform; but it is what proceeds from mere Goodneſs and Mercy, it is *according to God's own purpoſe and grace which was given us in Chriſt Jeſus*, (that is, which was given to *all ſincere Penitents* in and through Chriſt,) *before the World began*; 2 Tim. i. 9.

Hence to thoſe who ask, *What Need* of God's appointing this interpoſition of Chriſt, ſeeing he is *Himſelf* abſolute *Lord of all?* the Anſwer is plain. God is Supreme Governour and Lord of all, not only in *This particular Time and Place*, which is the Duration and Extent of our *preſent* World; but he is Lord of *all*

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abſolutely, in *all Ages* and in *all Worlds*; from Eternity to Eternity, and from Infinity to Infinity. And therefore *he* is to diſpenſe his Mercies in *ſuch* Methods, as he himſelf alone, in his infinite Wiſdom, knows to be *moſt conſiſtent* with the *Rules* of his *univerſal* and *eternal* Government.

Hence alſo to thoſe who ask, *Why Chriſt appeared ſo Late* in the World, the Anſwer is no leſs clear. *Chriſt* is *the ſame yeſterday, and to day, and for ever*; Heb. xiii. 8, By *Him* God created this World, and by *Him* has governed it from the Beginning. *He* preached by his Spirit, to the *diſobedient in the days of Noah*. *His* Day the Patriarchs *rejoiced to ſee*, and *beheld the Promiſes afar off*. *Him Moſes* typified in his *whole Law*; "and concerning Him *the* Pro-"phets ſearched and inquired diligently, what things the Spirit of Chriſt which "was in them did ſignify. *In the* Fulneſs of Time *he appeared viſibly as the* "Hope of Iſrael," and the *Deſire* and Expectation *of Nations*. And at the End, by *Him* will *God judge the World in Righteouſneſs*.

The Application and Concluſion of the whole matter, is; that the *Hope of eternal Life* thus *promiſed before the World began*, is *no Hope* at all to ſuch as live wickedly under the Goſpel; but to ſuch only, whoſe manners are by the Goſpel effectually reformed.

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Of the Fundamentals of Chriſtianity.

HEB. 6, i. 2.

Therefore leaving the Principles of the doctrine of Chriſt, let us go on unto Perfection, not laying again the foundation of Repentance from dead Works, and of Faith towards God; of the doctrine of baptiſms, and of laying on of hands; and of reſurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

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THE Apoſtle in the foregoing Chapter, having begun to enter upon a Sublime diſcourſe, concerning the Dignity of our Saviour's Perſon, and the Authority and Honour of his eternal Prieſthood; corrects himſelf at the 11*th* Verſe, for having attempted to explain too difficult a Subject, or rather for attempting to explain it to Perſons *not yet* of ſufficiently improved Capacities, to underſtand the depth of ſo great a Myſtery. *Of whom*, ſays he, *We have many things to ſay, and hard to be uttered, ſeeing ye are dull of hearing; For when for the time ye ought*

to

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ſing forward continually *towards the mark of the price of our high calling.* For, SERM. it is hardly poſſible, (he tells us,) that ſuch perſons as perpetually ſtand in need LVIII. of *laying again the foundation of the very firſt Principles* of Chriſtianity, ſhould ever be renewed to an effectual Amendment, or ever make any tolerable proficiency in Religion. *It is impoſſible*, ſays he, in the Words following the Text; the meaning is, *it is extremely difficult*; if men that have once been well inſtructed, ſhall ſo far fall away, as to ſtand in need of having the firſt elements of Religion perpetually inculcated to them anew; *it is next to impoſſible to expect*, that they can ever be renewed to an effectual Repentance, to a laſting and perſevering Obedience. *Therefore leaving*, ſays he, *the principles of the Doctrine of Chriſt*; that is, having once made *ſure* that theſe things have been ſufficiently inculcated and rooted in our Minds, ſo that there ſhall be no danger, nor ought it ever to be ſuppoſed poſſible that we ſhould forget or depart from *theſe*; *let us* from thenceforward (ſays he) "go on unto Perfection; not laying again the foun-"dation of Repentance from dead Works, and of Faith towards God; of the "doctrine of baptiſms, and of laying on of hands; and of reſurrection of the "dead, and of eternal Judgment.

In the Words thus explained, there are clearly implied theſe two Things. 1*ſt*, that there are ſome great and fundamental Truths, which are as it were *the Principles of the Doctrine of Chriſt*, which every Chriſtian is ſuppoſed to have been long ſince ſufficiently inſtructed in, ſo as not to ſtand in need of having them perpetually repeated to him; and Theſe the Apoſtle calls, *laying the Foundation: Therefore leaving the* Principles *of the Doctrine of Chriſt*, and *not laying again the* foundation. 2*dly*, that there are ſome other Doctrines of a higher and more ſublime Nature, in the *Knowledge* of which Chriſtians ought to improve themſelves, in order to eſtabliſh themſelves in a more *perfect Practice: Let us go on*, ſays he, *unto Perfection.*

I. *Firſt*; That there are ſome great and fundamental Truths, which are as it were *the Principles of the Doctrine of Chriſt*, which every Chriſtian is ſuppoſed to have been long ſince ſufficiently inſtructed in, ſo as not to ſtand in need of having them perpetually repeated to him, nor to be in any danger of forgetting or neglecting them: And Theſe the Apoſtle calls, *laying the Foundation.* Now *What* theſe Fundamental Doctrines are, that there might be no difficulty, no diſpute about them, he enumerates diſtinctly in the words of the Text; "Repentance from dead works, and Faith towards God; the Doctrine of Bap-"tiſms, and of laying on of hands; the Reſurrection of the Dead, and eter-"nal Judgment.

The *firſt* of theſe, in order of Nature, is *Faith towards God.* For this muſt evidently be the firſt Principle of all Religion, the beginning and corner-ſtone even of the Foundation itſelf. *He that cometh to God, muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*; Heb. vi. 6. This is the firſt Principle, not of the Doctrine of *Chriſt* only, but alſo of the Law of *Moſes*, of the Inſtitution of the *Patriarchs*, of the Precepts of *Noah*, of the Religion of *Nature* itſelf, even among thoſe who never had the benefit of divine Revelation. *This* Truth is found written in the moſt legible characters, not in the inſpired Scriptures only, but in the Writings of the *Philoſophers*, in the Diſcourſes of the *Learned*, in the Conſciences of the *Unlearned*, in the Hearts of all reaſonable and conſiderate men, in the Inſtincts of *Animals*, in the Motions and Proportions even of the *Inanimate* World itſelf. And is it not a Shame that *Men*, that Men endued with *Reaſon* and *Underſtanding*, that Men who live in a *learned* and a polite Age, that men who enjoy moreover the Light of the *Goſpel-Revelation*, and have been long inſtructed out of the Oracles of God? Is it not a Shame, that *They* ſhould need to have *This* Foundation laid for them any more? Is it imaginable, that after the Experience of *Ages*, and the Conſent of *Nations*; after the wonderful improvements of *natural* knowledge, and repeated Demonſtrations of Wiſdom, diſcovered in the Works of *Creation*; after the ſtrict Examinations of *Scripture*, and the Objections of Adverſaries conſidered and anſwered abundantly over and over again; is it

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imaginable there ſhould ſtill be perſons, who want to be conſtantly reminded of this very *firſt* Principle of Religion? And yet ſo it is, that even at this day, in the midſt of the greateſt Light of Knowledge the World ever enjoyed, there are ſome mens Minds exactly anſwering to *Job*'s elegant deſcription of the Shadow of Death; Their Mind, with reſpect to the Knowledge of Divine things, is a place *of Darkneſs*, " as Darkneſs itſelf, without any order, and where the " Light is as Darkneſs. *There are even yet* perverſe diſputes of men of corrupt " Minds, " who are deſirous to call in queſtion the very *Being* of him, in whom themſelves *live and move and have their Being*, and without whom nothing could have ever been at all. Which is the ſame Folly, as if a man ſhould deny there was any Light in the World, while he himſelf walked in the Brightneſs of the Sun ſhining in his Strength; or like the fooliſh Philoſopher of old, who pretended to diſpute againſt the Being of Motion, while he himſelf was on all Sides ſurrounded with its viſible and perpetual Effects. 'Tis to be hoped therefore, there will be No Neceſſity, to be *always* laying *This* Foundation among the Profeſſors of Chriſtianity; or to be *always* reminding them, of what it ought never to be ſuppoſed they poſſibly can be ignorant. But though they can never indeed be preſumed to be inſenſible of the *Being* of God; yet to *meditate* more frequently on what they cannot but know; and with greater ſeriouſneſs and attention to endeavour to think *worthily* of *Him*, in whoſe preſence they always walk, and open to whoſe eyes are all their Thoughts; of *This* they can never too frequently be reminded. For, to believe a God, or to have *Faith in him*, is not barely the giving a careleſs Aſſent to what we hear or are taught concerning him; but it is ſeriouſly conſidering and repreſenting it to ourſelves in our conſtant Thoughts and Meditations, as a Truth of the utmoſt importance to us, and wherein we are the moſt nearly concerned; that there is an infinite and eternal Being, a Being All-Powerful and All-Wiſe, a Being whoſe preſence is in every place, and whoſe years endure throughout all Ages; who created the World by his incomprehenſible Power, preſerves and governs it by his Wiſdom and Goodneſs, and will judge it by his Juſtice, Mercy and Truth. It is ſuch a Belief, as will naturally influence us to adore his inacceſſible Glory and Majeſty, to dread his Power, to admire his Wiſdom, to fear his Juſtice, to love his Goodneſs, to hope for his Mercy, to depend upon his Truth. This is what the Apoſtle here ſtiles *Faith towards God*, and is the *firſt* of all the fundamental *Principles of the Doctrine of Chriſt*.

Secondly; The *next* Principle in order of Nature, though *firſt* mentioned by the Apoſtle in the Text, is *Repentance from dead Works*. And this is a natural conſequence of *having Faith towards God*. For he who *believes* in God, muſt conſequently believe, that *Obedience* is neceſſary to be paid to his Commands. And then they who perform not that moſt juſt Obedience, but obſtinately *tranſgreſs* the Commands of their Supreme Governour; muſt be confeſſed to deſerve the ſevereſt Puniſhment. Which Puniſhment there is no poſſible means for the Offender to avoid, but by a timely *Repentance*: And the only ſatisfactory Evidence of the Truth of that Repentance, is a departure *from dead Works* to *ſerve the living God*: From *dead works*, that is, from the practice of ſuch Wickedneſs, as both by the natural conſequence of things, and by the righteous judgment and appointment of God, brings men to Deſtruction and *Death*; to Deſtruction, both of Body and Soul; to Death, both temporal and eternal: To that eternal Death, which, being a total and perpetual ſeparation of the Soul from God the only Author of Life and Happineſs, is, in Scripture ſenſe, the only real and proper Death; Natural and Temporal Death, or the diſſolution of the Body for a Time, being but as imperfect and figurative a repreſentation of *This* Death *eternal*, as the ſtill ſhorter Suſpenſion of the Faculties of the Mind in Sleep, is but a weak and faint Image or Reſemblance of Death *Temporal*. Moſt cloſely and neceſſarily therefore with *Faith towards God*, with a Belief and Fear of his Power and Juſtice, is connected this *ſecond* Principle of Religion, *Repentance from Dead Works*. When once God is acknowledged and firmly believed, to be the Supreme Governour and Judge of the

the World; when once the Mind of Man has entertained deep and ſtrong Impreſſions, true and worthy Apprehenſions of the Nature and Perfections of the Divine Majeſty; it then immediately appears Evident, that as all *Inanimate* Creatures, by the Neceſſity of their Nature, obey the Laws which he has appointed them, in the Conſtitution and Fabrick of this beautiful Syſtem of the material World; and, even in *that* Senſe, *all things*, as the Scripture expreſſes it, *ſerve him*: So *reaſonable* Creatures much *more*, by their Underſtanding and Will which he has indued them with, being ſenſible of their Dependence upon him and of the Gratitude they owe him, ought to make it the Buſineſs and the Pleaſure of their Lives, to ſhew forth the Praiſes and Glory of their Maker, by a cheerful Obedience to his Commands in all things. "If I be "a Father, where is mine honour? And if I be a Maſter, where is my Fear? "ſaith the Lord of Hoſts;" Mal. i. 6. The Beſt and moſt perfect of Created Beings, Angels and Saints in Heaven, do this perpetually; And Men upon Earth, according to the Ability and Capacity of their Nature, ought to look upon it as the higheſt Improvement and Perfection of their Faculties, to imitate herein that which is the greateſt Glory, that which is the only Ambition (if we may ſo ſpeak) of the Inhabitants of Heaven. To act otherwiſe than thus, and to oppoſe the Will of our Supreme Governour and greateſt Benefactor; to tranſgreſs wilfully the Juſt and Righteous Commands, of Him to whoſe Goodneſs we owe our Being, Ourſelves, and all that we enjoy or hope for; is the utmoſt Unworthineſs; and even no leſs an Abſurdity, for a *reaſonable* Creature to act ſo *unreaſonably*, than it would be for any of the *natural* Bodies in the World to move *unnaturally*. To ſet up the obſtinate Self-Will of frail duſt and aſhes, againſt the Supreme good Pleaſure of the Maker of all Things; unreaſonable Appetites and Paſſions, in oppoſition to the eternal Reaſon and Equity of things; Irregularity and Confuſion, in oppoſition to the Order and Harmony of Nature by which the Univerſe ſubſiſts; (all which, is done by Profaneneſs and Unrighteouſneſs, by Irreligion, Wickedneſs, and Debauchery of all kinds;) is what, (if *any thing* can provoke God, and unleſs we think God is *wholly unconcerned* for the Welfare and Government of the World,) muſt needs be acknowledged to deſerve, the higheſt Reſentment of the Divine Diſpleaſure. That Perſons who act thus diſorderly in the *reaſonable* World, ſhould be ſeverely puniſhed, and, if incorrigible, be utterly deſtroyed; is as neceſſary, as that any Obſtacle, which would diſturb the Motion of the Earth or Heavens, and would drive back this regular Frame into the Confuſion of its antient Chaos, ſhould be removed by the Care of the Supreme Artificer. A wicked Man therefore, whenever he is convinced and become ſatisfied, that this is his Caſe; as 'tis demonſtratively the Caſe of every wicked and diſorderly Perſon; there is nothing in Reaſon left for him to do, but immediately, with the utmoſt Indignation againſt his own Folly, to repent in Duſt and Aſhes; to cry mightily unto God for Pardon, who is able to ſave; and, in the Apoſtle's Phraſe, to ſhow forth his *Faith towards God*, by an effectual *Repentance from dead Works*. This therefore is the *ſecond Principle* of Religion, or of *the Doctrine of Chriſt*: A Principle abſolutely neceſſary to be laid as the Foundation of all Virtue; the Beginning or loweſt Degree whereof, is the forſaking of Vice; And yet 'tis ſuch a Foundation, as, if it always be laying, 'tis evident Men can never go on to any *Perfection*. 'Tis equally neceſſary therefore, that Chriſtians *ſhould repent*; and yet that they ſhould not ſtand in need of being *always repenting*. *Always repenting*; not of daily infirmities, which are unavoidable; but of new and great Crimes continually repeated; Of *Repentance from Theſe*, I ſay, the Scripture never ſuppoſes a Chriſtian to ſtand frequently in need. For of ſuch perſons the Apoſtle declares, in the words following the Text, that becauſe they are always *falling away*, therefore it is impoſſible they ſhould ever be *renewed* to an effectual *Repentance*.

Thirdly; The *next* fundamental *Principle* of Chriſtian Religion, here mentioned by the Apoſtle, is the *Doctrine of Baptiſms and of laying on of Hands*. Repentance, as has been already ſhown under the foregoing Head, is the indiſ- 1 Cor. vi. 11.

penſable

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penſable Duty of all Sinners: And the Conſideration of the Placability, the original Mercy and Goodneſs of God, affords very great ground of Hopes, even to *natural Reaſon*, that ſuch Repentance will be accepted of God. Yet ſince Hope, in the nature of the thing itſelf, differs neceſſarily from the Certainty and Aſſurance of Knowledge; (For *Hope that is ſeen*, as St. *Paul* argues, (Rom. viii. 24,) *is not Hope; for, what a man ſees, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we ſee not, then do we with Patience wait for it.*) Since therefore Hope, I ſay, differs neceſſarily from the Aſſurance of Knowledge; and as it implies a well-grounded Expectation of what we *do* reaſonably hope for, ſo at the ſame time it implies likewiſe a Poſſibility of falling ſhort of what we do *but* hope for; therefore it has pleaſed God to confirm this natural Hope, by the certainty of an expreſs Revelation in Chriſt, that he will accept the Repentance of Sinners. And this aſſurance he has commanded to be ſenſibly conveyed to us, by a very ſignificant Rite in the Sacrament of Baptiſm; Which Sacrament is for that reaſon ſtiled in Scripture, *the Baptiſm of Repentance for the Remiſſion of Sins.* And this Baptiſm is therefore a fundamental *Principle of the Doctrine of Chriſt*; who, as he came to *aſcertain our Hope* of God's accepting Repentance, ſo he has declared, that *except* (in order thereunto) *a man be born again of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* To this the Apoſtle adds, as a conſtant Appendage, *the laying on of Hands*; (the *doctrine*, ſaith he, *of Baptiſms and of laying on of Hands.*) Becauſe, by that Rite, newly baptized Perſons were in the Apoſtles Times endued with the Holy Ghoſt; and by the ſame Rite, ſpiritual Orders were conferred, for the miniſtration of Repentance by the Word and Sacraments; and by it, Penitents in the Primitive Times were admitted into the Church again, after the Solemnities of their publick Repentance. And each of theſe, as well as Baptiſm itſelf, were appointed to be adminiſtred but *once*; that Chriſtians might not neglect to *go on unto Perfection*, by being perpetually laying a-new the foundation of Religion, and perpetually going back to the firſt Principles thereof.

Fourthly; The *laſt* Principle of the Doctrine of Chriſt, mentioned here by the Apoſtle as the *Foundation* of all Religion; is *the Reſurrection of the Dead, and eternal Judgment.* I mention theſe two together, as but one; becauſe in the nature of things they are neceſſarily connected with each other. For the Reſurrection of the Dead is, only in order to Judgment; and eternal Judgment is a certain and neceſſary conſequence of the Reſurrection from the Dead. Both theſe together therefore, are a fundamental Principle of the Doctrine of Chriſt; and, (if there can be any Difference,) the moſt abſolutely fundamental of all others. For in every great Deſign, that which is laſt in Execution, is always firſt and principal in the Intention; and 'tis the conſiderableneſs of the *End* always, that gives *Birth* to any Undertaking, and *Continuance* in it when it is begun. This *laſt* therefore of the Principles of the Doctrine of Chriſt, the *Reſurrection* and *Judgment*, is that on which all the reſt are built, and on which they entirely depend. 'Tis This which gives all Authority to the Commands of Chriſt, and Life and Vigour to the whole Syſtem of the Goſpel. 'Tis This makes *Faith towards God* ſo reaſonable, and *Repentance from dead works* ſo neceſſary, and *Obedience* to the whole Goſpel ſo indiſpenſable. Without This, our *Faith in God* would be vain, our *Repentance from dead works* fruitleſs, and our *Obedience* unprofitable and ineffectual. For *if there be no Reſurrection of the Dead, then is our Preaching vain, and your Faith alſo is vain.* This therefore is ſo evidently a fundamental Principle, that in all reaſon it ought to be preſumed, whoever has made any tolerable proficiency in Chriſtianity, nay whoever makes any Profeſſion of it at all, needs not to have this Foundation perpetually laid a-new for him, but may be ſuppoſed always to be ſufficiently ſenſible of This great Truth, if he pretends to have any part in the Goſpel of Chriſt.

The Application or Uſe I ſhall make of what has been hitherto ſaid, ſhall be only this Obſervation; that the Doctrine of *Fundamentals*, about which learned and contentious Men have raiſed great Diſputes, is really, from this Paſſage

Paſſage of the Apoſtle, exceedingly clear and manifeſt. For the only Fundamental Doctrines of Chriſtianity, (*viz.* thoſe covenanted about at Baptiſm,) are plainly theſe; that we have *Faith towards God*; that we *Repent from dead Works*; that we have the Acceptableneſs of this Repentance aſſured to us through Chriſt in the miniſtration of the Word and Sacraments, ſtiled here by the Apoſtle the *Doctrine of Baptiſms and of laying on of hands*; and laſtly, that we live as become ſuch Perſons who are in continual Expectation, of a *Reſurrection from the dead*, and of *eternal Judgment*. Theſe, I ſay, are plainly the only Fundamentals of Chriſtianity; About theſe there can be no Controverſy; In theſe there can be no Ignorance, no not among Perſons of the meaneſt Capacity. And beſides theſe, whatever other Doctrines are occaſionally taught, or eagerly diſputed about, they cannot be of the *Foundation* of Religion; but Men may differ concerning them with Peace and Charity; and yet every one hold faſt the Root of their Confidence, the aſſurance of their Salvation, in theſe undiſputed Doctrines of *Faith* and *Obedience*.

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SERMON LIX.

Christians ought to endeavour to attain Perfection.

HEB. vi. 1, 2.

Therefore leaving the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto Perfection; not laying again the Foundation of Repentance from dead Works, and of Faith towards God; of the Doctrine of Baptisms, and of laying on of hands; and of Resurrection of the Dead, and of eternal Judgment.

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IN the Words I have before observed these two things:

1*st*, That there are some great and fundamental Truths, which are as it were the *Principles of the Doctrine of Christ*; which every Christian is supposed to have been long since sufficiently instructed in, so as not to stand in need of having them perpetually repeated to him; And these the Apostle calls, "laying the Foundation. Therefore "leaving the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ; *and* not laying again the Foundation.

2*dly*, That there are some other doctrines, of a higher and more sublime nature, in the *Knowledge* of which Christians ought to improve themselves, in order

der to eſtabliſh themſelves in a more perfect *Practice*. *Let us go on*, ſaith he, *unto Perfection*. SERM LIX

I have *already* conſidered the former of theſe; namely, the *firſt Principles of the Doctrine of Chriſt*: It remains that I proceed at this time, to diſcourſe upon our Improvement in ſuch *Knowledge* and *Practice*, as the Apoſtle here ſtiles *going on unto Perfection*.

It would be an unſpeakable Happineſs, and beyond the Hopes of theſe degenerate times; if the *generality* of Chriſtians did but competently underſtand the firſt *Principles* of their Religion, and in their Practice preſerve themſelves but even upon the *Foundation* of the Goſpel. But yet 'tis very neceſſary, that thoſe who are capable of greater improvements in *Knowledge*, ſhould be exhorted to make continual Progreſs in the Study of the more ſublime Doctrines of Chriſtianity; that they may *know the Love of Chriſt*, and *be able to comprehend with all Saints, what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height*: And with regard to *Practice*; unleſs men be perſwaded, to *endeavour* to go on unto *Perfection*, they will hardly live up ſteddily and conſtantly to the Obligation, even of the firſt *Principles* of Religion; nor, without a further Deſign of a ſuitable *Superſtructure*, be able long to maintain themſelves upon the *Foundation* itſelf.

The *Doctrines*, which the Apoſtle ſuppoſes Chriſtians obliged to improve themſelves in, after their inſtruction in the moſt *fundamental* ones recited in the Text, are ſuch as he proceeds to treat of in the following part of this Epiſtle; concerning the Nature and Dignity of the Perſon of Chriſt; the Authority and Honour of his eternal Prieſthood; the value of his Sacrifice, once offered for us for ever; the Preparations for the Goſpel, made by divine Providence, from the beginning of the World; and diſcovered by degrees, in God's Diſpenſations to the Patriarchs, in the Prieſthood of *Melchiſedec*, in the appointment of the order of *Aaron*, in the giving of the Law to *Moſes* by the Diſpoſition of Angels; and ending in the appearance of the Son of God himſelf, to eſtabliſh a new and more excellent Covenant, with greater Clearneſs, upon better Promiſes, and for an endleſs Duration. Theſe Doctrines are the Subject of the greater part of St. *Paul's* Epiſtles; and are ſingly worthy, of our moſt ſerious meditation and ſtudy, and of the moſt careful and particular Explication. But becauſe moſt of them will come to be ſeverally treated of, upon other occaſions; and becauſe Advancement in *Knowledge*, though highly commendable, and in ſome meaſure neceſſary, according to every man's abilities, and capacities, and opportunities, and advantages; yet is not ſo abſolutely and indiſpenſably, ſo univerſally neceſſary, as Improvement in *Practice*, wherein Perſons of all Capacities are obliged to endeavour to become Perfect; therefore, omitting the Conſideration of that part of Perfection, which conſiſts in the Enlargement of our Underſtanding and *Knowledge*; I ſhall confine my preſent Diſcourſe, to explain the intent and meaning of this Precept of the Apoſtle, under the limit of its being an Exhortation to Perfection in *Practice*: *Leaving the Principles of the Doctrine of Chriſt, let us go on unto Perfection.*

And is it then poſſible that mortal man, ſhould in any Senſe attain unto *Perfection?* Is it poſſible that Duſt and Aſhes, who may *ſay to Corruption, thou art my Father*; *and to the worm, thou art my Mother and Siſter?* Is it poſſible that we, who are *born in Sin, and conceived in Iniquity*; who are brought forth in Ignorance, and grow up in multiplicity of Errours; whoſe Underſtandings are dark, our Wills biaſſed, our Paſſions ſtrong, our Affections corrupted, our Appetites inordinate, our Inclinations irregular? Is it poſſible that we who are ſurrounded with Things themſelves obſcure, with Examples evil, with Temptations numberleſs as the variety of Objects that encompaſs us; Is it poſſible that *We* ſhould make *any* Progreſs towards arriving at *Perfection?* With *Men* indeed this muſt needs be impoſſible, but with *God*, all things are poſſible. For when we conſider on the other ſide, that we have a perfect Rule, and an unerring Inſtructor; an Example compleat as the Divine Life, and yet with all the Condeſcenſions of Human Infirmity; Motives ſtrong and powerful, as the Rewards of Heaven; and preſſing, as the Neceſſity of avoiding endleſs Deſtruction;

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tion; Assistances mighty, as the Grace of God; and effectual as the continual Guidance of the Spirit of Truth: When we consider *This*, I say; we may then perhaps be as apt to wonder on the *other* hand, that *All* men are not Perfect. And yet, with all these Advantages, the Perfection that the best of men ever arrive to, is but in a figurative and very imperfect Sense; with great Allowances, and much diminution; with frequent defects and many, very many Limitations.

In order to explain therefore this Exhortation of the Apostle, *Let us go on unto Perfection*; it may not be improper. *1st*, to consider distinctly what it is, that, in Scripture-sense, is stiled *Perfection*; and *2dly*, To show the Necessity of our endeavouring to attain it.

First; We are to consider what it is, that, in Scripture-sense, is stiled *Perfection*. And here, if we observe, that *the things* the Apostle in the Text *opposes Perfection to*, are of two sorts; *1st*, the *Principles themselves* of the Doctrine of Christ; Faith and Repentance, Baptism and the Expectation of a Judgment to come; and *2dly*, such a defective *Practice* upon these Principles, as makes a man always stand in need of *renewing the Foundation* of his Religion; it will appear, that *Perfection*, in the Apostle's Sense, must likewise on the contrary signify two things; *1st*, Some particular *Virtues*, peculiar to such, as have made considerable Progress in Religion, beyond the first Principles or Elements of the Doctrine of Christ; and *2dly*, Some peculiar *degree* of Improvement in *the* general *Practice of* all *Virtues*; attained to by such, as are advanced beyond danger of needing to begin again at the Foundation of Religion; that is, such Persons as our Saviour calls *just men, who need no Repentance*; or, in the Apostle's phrase, who need not to *lay again the Foundation of Repentance from dead Works*; *and of Faith towards God*.

1st; Perfection denotes some particular *Virtues*, peculiar to such, as have made considerable Progress in Religion, beyond the first Principles or Elements of the Doctrine of Christ. *Believing in God*; *Repenting from dead Works*, that is, forsaking all gross Sins; being *baptized* into the Name of Christ; and living in expectation of a *Judgment to come*; are Principles, without which a man cannot so much as begin to be a Christian: But after this, it is necessary that he likewise proceed further, to the attainment of some more excellent and exalted Virtues; in order to *perfect* that which was well *begun*. The *particular Virtues*, to which the Scripture generally ascribes this high degree of Improvement; and the attainment of which, St. *Paul* in this Epistle particularly explains to be the *going on unto Perfection*; are these which follow.

1. That *Holiness* and *Purity* of Mind, which implies our being in an extraordinary manner separated from, and raised above, corrupt and sensual Desires; the *keeping ourselves unspotted from the World*, as St. *James* expresses it; and having our affections fixed steddily and constantly upon religious and heavenly things as our Great and Principal End. That Purity of Mind, of which *Repentance from dead Works* is the *first beginning*; and of which the Terrours of the Law, *the Mountain that burned with fire*, and *the blackness and darkness and tempest*, are the *first Motives*, as the Apostle in the *xiith* Chapter of this Epistle describes them; but its *Improvement* and *Perfection*, is owing to the Efficacy of the New Covenant *established upon better Promises*; to the Contemplation of our being *come unto mount Sion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem*; *and to an innumerable company of Angels*; *to the general Assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the Spirits of just men made perfect*; *and to Jesus the Mediator of the New covenant*; *and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel*. In a word; That Holiness and Purity, which St. *Peter* describes, 1 Pet. i. 15; *As he which has called you, is holy*; *so be ye holy in all manner of Conversation*; *Because it is written, Be ye holy for I am holy*.

2. Another particular Virtue, the Attainment of which is peculiarly implied in this Phrase of *going on unto Perfection*; is that universal Love and Christian Charity, which our Saviour calls his *New Commandment*; which St. *Paul* declares

clares to be the *fulfilling of the Law*, and which he particularly exhorts to at the End of this Epiſtle; *Let Brotherly Love continue*; ch. xiii. ver. 1: And ver. 16; *To do good and to communicate forget not, for with ſuch Sacrifices God is pleaſed.* Of which univerſal Love and Charity, (the peculiar effect of a true Chriſtian Spirit prevailing among men,) it is very remarkable, that the two great Branches of it, the *loving or doing good to our Enemies* and *ſhewing mercy to the poor*, are both of them in Scripture expreſsly called by the Name of *Perfection*. *Above all things*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *put on Charity, which is the Bond of perfectneſs*; Col. iii. 14. And *Love your Enemies*, ſaith our Saviour, *do good to them that hate you*; *that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven; for he maketh his Sun to riſe on the evil and on the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt and on the unjuſt: Be ye therefore* Perfect, *even as your Father which is in Heaven is Perfect*; St. Matt. v. 44. Which laſt words St. *Luke* thus varies; *Be ye therefore* Merciful, *as your Father alſo is Merciful*; St. Luke vi. 36: As if *Perfection* was but another word, of the ſame ſignification with Mercy and Goodneſs.

3*dly*; By *Perfection*, the Apoſtle in this Exhortation ſtill more particularly means, That eſtabliſhed *Firmneſs and Conſtancy* in the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, which enables a man even to *ſuffer* for the ſake of his Religion; for the ſake of Truth, Righteouſneſs, and Virtue; and which alone can ſecure to him the Benefit of thoſe Advances, which he has already made towards being a Follower of Jeſus: The Remiſſion of Sins in Baptiſm being cancelled again to him, that ſhould afterwards deny his Saviour; and Repentance from dead Works being of no benefit to ſuch a Perſon, as afterward through Fear and Want of Steddineſs returns to them again. This appears from the words immediately following the Text; where the Apoſtle ſtrengthens his Exhortation of *going on unto Perfection*, by proceeding to ſet forth the extremely dangerous ſtate, of thoſe who for want of it ſhould *fall away*. And almoſt the whole following part of the Epiſtle, is ſpent in perſwading men, by all the Arguments both of Encouragement and Terrour, to attain to this Perfection of being able to *ſuffer Perſecution* for Chriſt. Our Saviour himſelf is deſcribed to have been made *perfect* by *Sufferings*, ch. ii. ver. 10: And in propheſying beforehand of thoſe Sufferings, he expreſſes it himſelf by the ſame phraſe, St. *Luke* xiii. 32; *I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I ſhall be* perfected. In like manner; warning his Diſciples of the Perſecutions they muſt expect to meet with, he tells them, St. *Luke* vi. 40; *The Diſciple is not above his Maſter*; *but every one that is* Perfect, *ſhall be as his Maſter*; that is, as it is explained in the parallel place, St. *Matt.* x. 24; muſt expect to be perſecuted like him. And giving inſtruction to the young man, who deſired to know what he muſt do to be Perfect; *If thou wilt be* Perfect, ſaith he, *go and ſell that thou haſt, and give to the poor, and come and follow me.* But

2*dly*; As *Perfection* denotes thus ſome *particular* Virtues, peculiar to ſuch as have made conſiderable Progreſs in Religion, beyond the firſt Principles or Elements of the Doctrine of Chriſt; ſo it ſignifies alſo ſome peculiar *Degree* of Improvement, in the *general Practice of* all *Virtues*, attained to by ſuch, as are advanced beyond danger of needing to begin again at the Foundation of *Religion*: And *what* that peculiar *degree* of Improvement is, remains next to be explained. That it is not an abſolute and compleat Freedom from All Sin, the Scripture, in conjunction with Experience and with the Reaſon of things, clearly aſſures us; telling us, that *in many things we offend All*; and that *if we ſay we have no Sin, we deceive ourſelves, and the Truth is not in us.* Agreeably to which, and to the known infirmity of the Nature of Man, holy *Job* declares of himſelf; *If I juſtify myſelf, my own mouth ſhall condemn me*; *If I ſay I am perfect, it ſhall alſo prove me perverſe*; Job ix. 20. But the plain meaning of that *Degree* of Improvement in Goodneſs, to which the Holy Ghoſt in Scripture has vouchſafed to give the title of *Perfection*, may briefly be expreſſed in theſe three particulars.

1. That it amounts to an entire *Uprightneſs* of the Intention and endeavour; an *Integrity* of the Heart and Affections: which though, in this preſent frail

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state, it cannot possibly have so steddy an effect, as to make all a man's *Actions* perfectly free from Failing, yet it must signify that the main *Design* of his Life, be always perfectly sincere. Hence *Uprightness* or *Integrity* and *Perfection*, are promiscuously used in Scripture to the same sense. *Mark the* perfect *man, and behold the* upright; *for the end of that man is Peace*; Ps. xxxiii. 7. And God's command to *Abraham*, which we render, *Walk before me, and be thou* perfect, Gen. xvii. 1; is in the original, *be thou upright*. And in the character of *Job*, the words are joined together, *Job* i. 8; he was *a* perfect *and an* upright *man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil*. And in the same signification that it is said of *Noah*, *Gen.* vi. 9; that he *was a just man, and* perfect *in his generation*; and that *David* declares his own pious resolution, Ps. ci. 3; *I will walk in my house with a* perfect *heart*; in the same signification it is affirmed of some of the good Kings of *Judah*, that their *Heart was* right *with the Lord their God*, that is, it was *upright* and *sincere*; and that they *sought him with their* whole *Heart*: Which is of the same import, with what our Saviour calls *Loving the Lord our God with* all *our Heart*: The meaning is; not being free from all Frailties and Imperfections, (which, in the present state, is impossible,) but according to the best of our abilities, dedicating ourselves steddily and uniformly to the service of God, to the search after Truth, and to the practice of Righteousness; not serving two Masters, not dividing our Affections between God and Mammon, between the Love of Sin and the Desire of obeying God's commands: Which is generally the case of those who have but newly begun to *lay the Foundation of Repentance from dead Works*.

2. Perfection implies *universality* of that Obedience in the *Extent*, which it is not possible should be faultless and compleat in the *Degree*. He that indulges any one sinful Habit; that in other things keepeth the whole Law, but knowingly and habitually offendeth in any one great point; is so far from being *perfect*, even in the *least strict* and *Scripture sense* of the Word; that he can hardly be truly said, to have so much as begun to lay the *Foundation* of Religion, in that first and most necessary Principle, of *Repentance from dead Works*. Concerning righteous and upright Persons, the Scripture always declares that they *do* not, nay that they *cannot* commit Sin; 1 John iii. 9; that, morally speaking, it is *certain* they will not fall into any gross or habitual Impiety: But, that they *cleanse themselves from* All *filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God*; 2 Cor. vii. 1: And that *the man of God must be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto* All *good Works*; 2 *Tim.* iii. 17. And according to this declaration, the Character of good and virtuous Persons, such as were *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth*, is, that they *walk in* All *the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless*; St. *Luke* i. 6; in *all* his Commandments universally without exception; that is, without allowing themselves in the Practice of any *one* known Sin. And yet even that universal Blamelessness, does not exclude the common infirmities of our Nature; for so *Zacharias* himself, immediately after this singular Character, is charged with a frailty of Unbelief, and struck dumb for it. And St. *John* in the very same Epistle, wherein, with respect to *Wickedness*, he declares that a good man *does* not, nay *cannot* sin; yet with regard to unavoidable *Infirmities*, he assures even the Best of Men, that if they say they have *no Sin*, they deceive themselves and the Truth is not in them.

3. By being *perfect* is signified a man's having attained such a *Habit* of doing Righteousness, or of virtuous Living; as that it become *easy and delightful*, and in a manner, *natural* to him; without any of that difficulty and reluctance, which usually attend the first Beginnings of *Repentance from dead Works*. This Progress is excellently described in the Book of *Ecclesiasticus*, ch. iv. 16, 17, 18; *At the first, Wisdom will walk with a man by crooked ways, and bring fear and dread upon him, and torment him with her discipline, until she may trust his Soul, and try him by her laws; then will she return the straight way unto him, and comfort him*, and he *shall inherit her, and his generation shall hold her in possession*. And more briefly by *Solomon*, Prov. iv. 18; *The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day*. When a man

loves

loves Virtue, and can ſay with the Pſalmiſt, that his *delight* is in the Law of God; and with our Saviour, that his *meat and drink* is to do the Will of him that ſent him; then he begins to approach towards *the Angelick* ſtate; nay he becomes partaker, ſays St. *Peter*, even of the *divine* Nature itſelf: And St. *Paul* deſcribing his *own* experience in this matter, thus expreſſes it, " Gal. ii. 20; I am " crucified with Chriſt: Nevertheleſs I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me; " and the life which I now live in the Fleſh, I live by the Faith of the Son of " God, who loved me and gave himſelf for me.

Having thus explained what is meant by *Perfection* in the Scripture-ſenſe; it remains that I ſhow briefly in the

Second place, the Neceſſity of our endeavouring to attain it. And here it is evident.

1ſt; That unleſs we continually ſtrive and preſs forward toward *Perfection*, we ſhall never make ſo much as any tolerable *Progreſs*. He that never hopes to finiſh the *Superſtructure*, will, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it in the Text, be always laying again the *Foundation* of Religion, and never be renewed to an effectual Repentance. The *Luke-warm* Perſon, is by our Saviour deſcribed in the *Revelation*, to be *wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked*, and not capable of any inheritance among them that *are arrayed in fine linnen*, which is the *Righteouſneſs* and the good Works of the Saints. Whoever has a right Senſe of Religion, will perpetually be endeavouring to *grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*; he will with St. *Paul*, never think he has *already attained*, or is *already perfect*; but *forgetting thoſe things which are behind, and reaching forth unto thoſe things which are before*, he will always *preſs forward towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus*. He will never think himſelf ſufficiently advanced; but gaining continually a more and more compleat Victory over his Frailties and Infirmities, will *go from ſtrength to ſtrength* in the Improvements of Virtue here, till he *appear before God* in the Perfection of Holineſs and of Glory hereafter.

2dly; It is neceſſary to endeavour after the *Perfection* hitherto deſcribed, becauſe without it we can have no ſettled Peace in this *World*, nor Aſſurance of Happineſs in the *next*. *Fears* and *Doubts*, *Scruples* and endleſs *Anxiety*, muſt in great meaſure be the Portion, of him that is always laying anew the *Foundation* of Religion: But when a man is become *Perfect* in the Senſe now explained, in the merciful and Goſpel-ſenſe of the word, which makes all reaſonable allowance for unavoidable Frailty; then it is that he attains that Tranquility and Aſſurance, that Peace and Satisfaction of Mind, which wiſe men have compared to a *continual Feaſt*; which is indeed a foretaſte of the Happineſs of Heaven, and a rejoicing before-hand in Chriſt, with *joy unſpeakable and full of Glory*. Such a Perſon as has arrived at this improved State of Religion; *lives* in *Peace*, and *dies* with *Aſſurance*; and at the appearance of our Lord, ſhall be *preſented faultleſs before the preſence of his glory, with exceeding Joy*.

I only add two very brief Inferences, from what has been ſaid, and ſo conclude. And

Firſt; It is evident that the *Perfection* recommended in Scripture, does not conſiſt in Works of *Supererogation*, as the Church of *Rome* has vainly imagined. It does not conſiſt in Will-Worſhip and Works of voluntary Humility; Works performed over and above the Commandments of God, and beyond the Obligation of our Chriſtian Duty: All which things are vain and impoſſible; and are only, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, " *mens* beguiling themſelves of their reward, " *an* intruding into thoſe things which they have not ſeen, *and a being* vainly " puſt up with their fleſhly mind. " But *true* Perfection, and that which *is poſſible* and *neceſſary* for *us* to attain, conſiſts, as has been ſhown, in theſe three things, in the *Uprightneſs*, the *Univerſality*, and the *Habitualneſs* of our Obedience.

Secondly; What has been ſaid concerning the true nature of Chriſtian *Perfection*, may ſuffice to remove needleſs Fears and Scruples out of the Minds of melancholy and pious perſons; who, when they read that they are commanded to *be perfect, even as their Father which is in Heaven is perfect*, are apt to be dejected

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jected and look upon their Duty as impoſſible; for want of conſidering the true Nature of Things, and of comparing places of Scripture one with another. For, from what has been already explained, it is evident that in that Precept cannot be *meant* a perfection of degrees, but only a ſimilitude or imitation in kind. The higheſt attainable perfections of the moſt excellent Creatures in the Univerſe, are infinitely mean and imperfect in compariſon of God, "*who* chargeth even "his Angels with Folly, and the Heavens are not pure in his ſight." How much more weak and of no value, muſt the beſt performances of frail, mortal, and ſinful Men, of neceſſity be! But though all that we can poſſibly do, muſt needs fall infinitely ſhort of our moſt perfect pattern, yet we are indiſpenſably obliged to be like it in our proportion, and according to our capacity; and as a finite *can* reſemble infinite, ſo we are to reſemble God, by partaking of the ſame Excellencies in *kind*, though they cannot but be infinitely inferiour in *degree*. A Candle, though its Light bears no proportion at all to the Light of the Sun, yet it reſembles it nevertheleſs in giving Light; whereas Darkneſs is directly contrary to Both: So the Virtues of Angels and of Men, though they bear no proportion at all to the adorable Perfections of God, yet they reſemble them nevertheleſs in being of the ſame nature and kind; whereas Wickedneſs is in its whole kind a State of Contrariety, Oppoſition, and Enmity. A perfect and moſt compleat Example is ſet before us for our Imitation, that aiming always at that which is moſt excellent, we may *grow* continually, and make a perpetual Progreſs in the ways of Virtue; and though we can never come up to our pattern itſelf; yet it is ſufficient that we may juſtly be ſaid to become *like* unto God, when, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, we *are made partakers of the Divine Nature*; and ſuch Imitation of God, as our frail and mortal Nature is capable of, is truly and in a proper ſenſe the comparative Perfection of our *Humane Nature*, as abſolute Perfection is the Perfection of *the Divine*.

SERMON

SERMON LX.

The Reward of Juſtice.

LUK. xiv. 14, latter part.

For thou ſhalt be recompenſed at the Reſurrection of the Juſt.

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THE word *Juſt*, in this place, is of the ſame *general* import, as *Righteous* or *Virtuous*; expreſſing, not the Performance of a *particular Duty*, but the habitual Practice of *Virtue in general*. Thus in *Other* places of Scripture; Matt. xiii. 49; *At the end of the World, the Angels ſhall----ſever the wicked from among the* Juſt: The Meaning is *general*, They ſhall ſeparate the *Bad* from the *Good*. Again; *Gen.* vi. 9; *Noah was a* juſt *man:* The Senſe is; He was a virtuous and religious Perſon, one who feared God and kept his Commandments; For ſo his Character is more at large drawn out in the ſame Verſe, "Noah was a *juſt* man, "and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. *In like manner*, "Heb. xii. 23; Ye are come to the general aſſembly and church of the firſt-"born which are written in Heaven,----to the Spirits of *juſt* men made per-"fect: The Meaning is; to the company of all the righteous and good-men,

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who have lived and died in the Fear of God, and in the practice of virtue and true holineſs, in all Ages and Nations of the World.

The *Reaſon why* Univerſal Virtue and Goodneſs is thus frequently repreſented under the *particular* name of *Juſtice*, is becauſe *Juſtice* is ſo great, ſo ſubſtantial, ſo important a part of true Religion, that, by a figure of Speech very uſual and obvious in numberleſs other Caſes, a part ſo conſiderable is eaſily and naturally put for the Whole. Religion conſiſts principally of two Great Branches; the Love of God, and of our Neighbour: And as *Loving* or *Fearing God*, ſignifies uſually the ſame in general, as being truly religious; becauſe whoever has a juſt Senſe of *God* upon his mind, will not eaſily be prevailed upon to do Wrong to *Men*: So being a *Juſt Man*, is likewiſe commonly put for being perfectly and entirely religious; becauſe whoever ſo loves Virtue, as to do always what is right to *Men*, will not eaſily be defective in his regards to *God*, the Supreme Lover and Encourager of all Righteouſneſs and Virtue.

I ſhall conſider the word at this time in its *proper* and limited Senſe, as it ſignifies more peculiarly our Duty of doing Right to *Men*, or dealing *juſtly and equitably* with *each other*. And in treating upon this Subject, I ſhall, *firſt*, deſcribe the *Nature* of this virtue of Juſtice, the *Particulars* in which it conſiſts, and the *Bounds* to which its obligation extends. *Secondly*, I ſhall conſider the *Neceſſity* of the Practice of this virtue, the *Benefits* thence *naturally* ariſing to Mankind, and the *Folly and Miſchief of Iniquity*. And *Thirdly*, I ſhall ſet forth the particular *Reward* promiſed to this Virtue from *God*; The *Reſurrection unto Life* being in Scripture deſcribed emphatically as the *property* of *Juſt Men*, and it being ſtiled *Their* reſurrection; ſo that even to thoſe who ſhall be rewarded for *Other* virtues, the Promiſe is, that they ſhall be recompenſed *at the Reſurrection of the* Juſt. In the

I. *Firſt* place, I ſhall briefly deſcribe the *Nature* of this virtue of Juſtice, the *Particulars* in which it conſiſts, and the *Bounds* to which its obligation extends. The general and moſt conſtant exerciſe of this Virtue, is in mens *private dealings* with each other in the common Affairs of Life: In which, the Great Rule of Practice, is That Noble Maxim, founded in the eternal Reaſon of Things, and in the univerſal Benefit of Mankind, and enforced moreover by our Saviour as a fundamental Doctrine of the Goſpel; *Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do unto You, even ſo do unto Them*; *for This* (ſays he) *is the Law and the Prophets*. The Acts by which this great Rule is tranſgreſſed in the common affairs of Private life, are all ſorts of *Fraud* and *Cheating*, all *Deceit* and *Overreaching* each other in matters of Traffick or Bargaining: Concerning which the Scripture declares, that *a falſe balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a juſt Weight is his Delight*; Prov. xi. 1. Under the ſame denomination comes all *Oppreſſion*, *Extortion*, and Making unreaſonable *Advantage* of the *Neceſſities* of thoſe we deal with: All *Aſſiſtance* or *Encouragement* given to *Others*, directly or indirectly to do wrong: Alſo *Neglecting* to pay juſt *Debts*; keeping back the *Wages* of the Poor which they have earned by their Labour; and every thing of the like kind: Concerning which, God declares by the Prophet, "Jer. xxii. "13; Wo unto him that buildeth his houſe by Unrighteouſneſs, and his Cham-"bers by wrong; that uſes his neighbour's Service without Wages, and giveth "him not for his work:" And it is with great and eloquent Earneſtneſs, that *Job* expreſſes his Senſe of This part of true Religion, *ch.* xxxi. 14, 15, 16; "If I deſpiſed the cauſe of my man-ſervant or of my maid-ſervant, when they "contended with me; If I have with-held the poor from their Deſire, or have "cauſed the Eyes of the Widow to fail; What then ſhall I do, when God riſ-"eth up? And when he viſiteth, what ſhall I anſwer him?" All theſe and the like Inſtances of private *Injuſtice*, are indeed the very ſame Sin, as deſpoiling Men of their Properties by Force or Robbery. For fraudulently with-holding from Another his juſt Due, is only in a different manner the very ſame thing, as taking from him by Violence his preſent proper Poſſeſſion. And if at any time any of theſe things be done under the colour of *Law*, or in ſuch manner as to *evade* humane *Laws*; yet the Crime is not thereby the leſs, but in reality the greater;

greater; becauſe then to the Sin of *Injuſtice* there is an *Aggravation* added, in perverting the Means by which Publick Juſtice ſhould be preſerved among Men. Likewiſe, when Any Wrong of this kind is committed in *Breach of Truſt*, by Such as are *any way entruſted* with the Affairs of Others; however *humane Laws* may be *leſs ſevere*, and make it *more difficult* to puniſh them; yet *in Conſcience*, and *in the Sight of God*, it is truly an *Increaſe* and *Aggravation* of the Guilt, as being a *double Injuſtice*. Now in *Great* and *Plain* Inſtances, the *natural ſenſe* indeed of every Man's own Mind, *neceſſarily* makes him deteſt and abhor the Acts of unrighteouſneſs of This ſort: But the principal caution needful therefore to be given in This matter, is, that all perſons would carefully beware of the *firſt Beginnings* of Injuſtice, and of being tempted to wrong their Neighbours in *ſmall* things, which they may perhaps very erroneouſly look upon as of no great importance. For generally it is by being ſeduced at firſt into ſuch ſmaller tranſgreſſions, that men become hardened by degrees, till at length they run into the greateſt and moſt Capital Offences. But to proceed: For the ſame reaſons that Juſtice and Equity are Duties neceſſary to be performed *at all*; it is neceſſary likewiſe, that where-ever there has been any failure in the practice of theſe Duties, there *Reſtitution* muſt be made to the perſons that have been wronged. For true Repentance includes neceſſarily a ſincere Deſire, that the Crime had never been committed at all; and the only poſſible Evidence of the Sincerity of That Deſire, is Undoing the Action, where the Nature of the Thing permits, in reality and by Effects: *If the wicked* reſtore *the pledge*; Ezek. xxxiii. 15; *and give again That he had robbed*; then *he ſhall ſurely live*, ſaith the Lord. Further: Whoever is ſincerely deſirous to avoid any *Crime*, muſt be careful to avoid alſo the *Temptations* that naturally lead to it: And therefore He who would not be tempted to *defraud Others*, muſt conſider that he is obliged by the Duty of Juſtice to avoid *Idleneſs*, and to *ſupport Himſelf*, if he can, by *his* Own *Labour and Induſtry*: Eph. iv. 28; "Let him that ſtole, ſteal no more; but "rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that "he may have to give to Him that needeth." Laſtly; Under the Duty of private Juſtice between man and man, the Scripture comprehends alſo *Charitableneſs*, or Doing good *to the Poor*, according to the proportion of mens ſeveral Abilities. The reaſon is, becauſe, in the Scripture-account and eſtimation of things, great *Uncharitableneſs* is a ſort of *defrauding the Poor* of the Means by which God intended they ſhould be ſupported: *Prov.* iii. 27; *With-hold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.* And *even in my Text itſelf*, the word *Juſt*, ſeems to be more *eſpecially* applied to Perſons good and *charitable*. *Thou ſhalt be bleſſed*, ſays our Lord, *for they* (the poor) *cannot recompenſe thee*; *for thou ſhalt be recompenſed at the Reſurrection of the* Juſt. And not only *charitableneſs to the poor*, but in general *All kinds* of *equitable and merciful* proceedings whatſoever, are in Scripture-language included under the Notion of *Juſtice*: Matt. i. 19; *Joſeph* was a *Juſt*, that is, a *compaſſionate* man, unwilling to expoſe needleſsly even one whom he thought a *Guilty perſon*, to Reproach. And after the ſame manner of ſpeaking, *God's* great *Goodneſs* and Mercy towards Sinners, is by the Apoſtle ſometimes called *The* Righteouſneſs *of God*; and, *God is not* unrighteous, (ſaith he) *to forget your works and labour of love*; and, *God is* faithful *and* juſt, *to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanſe us from all Unrighteouſneſs*. Theſe are the principal Inſtances, to which the Notion of *Juſtice*, conſidered in the largeſt and Scriptural ſenſe of the word, extends in the exerciſe of it towards *particular* perſons. But there is alſo further, a Duty of *Juſtice* towards the *Publick*. There is incumbent upon men the very ſame obligation, not to wrong the *Community*; as there is, not to violate any *private* man's Right, or defraud any *particular* perſon of his Property. The only Reaſon, why men are not always ſufficiently ſenſible of This; ſo that Many, who are very Juſt in their Dealings between *Man and Man*, will yet be very fraudulent or rapacious with regard to the *Publick*; is becauſe, in this *latter* caſe, it is not ſo obviouſly and immediately apparent *on whom* the injury falls, as it is in the caſe of *private* Wrongs. But ſo long as the Injury is clear

and

SERM. LX. and certain; the *Uncertainty* of the perſons upon whom the Injury falls in particular, or the *Number* of the perſons among whom the Damage may chance to be divided, alters not at all the Nature of the Crime itſelf. And though Injuries of this kind, in *ſmaller* Caſes, are not perhaps immediately felt and complained of, yet when the Publick comes to be wronged by Perſons of large and extenſive Power, then not only the *Crime* itſelf, but the *Effects* of it alſo become greater and more apparent, than in the Caſe of *private* Injuſtice. And therefore a particular and more emphatical Command is given upon this occaſion to thoſe entruſted with any degrees of Power: "22 Sam. xxiii. 2; "The Spirit of the Lord ſpake by me, and his word was in my tongue: "The God of Iſrael ſaid, The Rock of Iſrael ſpake to me: He that ruleth "over Men muſt be *Juſt*, ruling in the Fear of God: And he ſhall be as the "Light of the Morning, when the Sun riſeth, even a Morning without "Clouds; as the tender Graſs ſpringing ought of the Earth, by clear ſhining after rain." Laſtly, there is a Juſtice and Equity due, not only to the Community or Nation, of which we happen to be a Part; but alſo to *All Mankind*, as our *Fellow-Creatures*, or (in the Goſpel-ſtile) as being our *Neighbours* and *Brethren*. "*For God* hath made of One Blood, (*Acts* xvii. 26,) all "Nations of Men, for to dwell on all the face of the Earth, and hath determined the Times before appointed, and the Bounds of their Habitation." And it is the Duty of every rational Creature, to look upon himſelf as a Part or Member of that One Univerſal Community; ſent into the World by the Great Author of Nature, to promote (as much as in Him lies) the publick Good and Welfare of all his Fellow-creatures: *For no man liveth to himſelf, and no man dieth to himſelf*; Rom. xiv. 7. This is That univerſal Equity and Benevolence, That *Bond of Perfectneſs*, That *Fulfilling of the whole Law*, which in Scripture is ſtiled *Loving our Neighbours as ourſelves*, and *Doing unto All men as we would they ſhould do unto Us*. This is what our Saviour calls, being *perfect even as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect*. This is imitating of *Him*; who *does Good to All, and whoſe tender Mercies are over all his Works*. This is being indeed *the children of our Father which is in Heaven, who maketh his Sun to riſe on the Evil and on the Good, and ſendeth Rain on the Juſt and on the Unjuſt*. The Meaning is, not that in *all* things God deals alike with all Men; but that in *Many* Degrees and Inſtances, (which is the Glory of a Juſt and Righteous Adminiſtration,) his Goodneſs, Mercy and Compaſſion, extends itſelf even to *All*. "Pſ. lxxxix. 15; Righteouſ"neſs and Equity are the Habitation of his Seat, Mercy and Truth ſhall "go before his Face." And in the ſame extenſive Senſe of the word Juſtice or Equity, as including every reaſonable degree of Benevolence, Mercy and Compaſſion; is *our Saviour* likewiſe, *Acts* xxii. 14; by why of Eminence ſtiled *That Juſt One*.

And thus having diſtinctly deſcribed (which was the *Firſt* thing propoſed) the *Nature* of this Virtue of Juſtice, the *Particulars* in which it conſiſts, and the *Bounds* to which its Obligation extends; I proceed Now in the

II. *Second* place, to conſider the *Neceſſity* of the Practice of this Virtue, the *Benefits* thence *naturally* ariſing to Mankind, and the *Folly and Miſchief of every ſort of Iniquity*. And this appears evidently, in the very *Nature and Reaſon* of the Thing. For upon the ſecuring of Mens Properties, depends all humane Society; and without Juſtice and Equity, there could be no Commerce or Converſation amongſt Men: Nor is there any other poſſible Way, by which Mankind could be diſtinguiſhed from the wild Beaſts of the Foreſt, which Devour each other according to their Strength, and have No Title or Property in any Thing: They would All be in the Caſe which was foretold concerning *Iſmael*, Gen. xvi. 12; "His hand "will be againſt every man, and every man's hand againſt Him." On the contrary, Were this virtue of Juſtice and Equity, Benevolence and Good-Will, univerſally practiſed amongſt Mankind; the Benefit of it would be incredibly and inconceiveably

conceivably great: Inſomuch that even this preſent mortal State, would be a ſort of Anticipation of that *New Heaven and New Earth, wherein righteouſneſs* is to *dwell* for ever. The Prophet *Iſaiah* gives us a moſt eloquent deſcription of the Happineſs of ſuch a State, in his prediction of the Effect which the univerſal Prevailing of true Religion and of the Kingdom of the Meſſiah would produce in the World: ch. xi. 4; "With righteouſneſs ſhall he judge the "poor, and reprove with equity for the Meek of the Earth; and he ſhall ſmite "the Earth with the rod of his Mouth, and with the breath of his lips ſhall "he ſlay the wicked: And righteouſneſs ſhall be the girdle of his loins, and "Faithfulneſs the girdle of his reins: The Wolf alſo ſhall dwell with the "Lamb, and the leopard ſhall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the "young lion and the fatling together, and a little child ſhall lead them:——— "They ſhall not hurt nor deſtroy, in all my holy mountain; for the earth ſhall "be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea." Nay, the Wiſeſt men even in the *Heathen World itſelf*, had ſuch a Senſe of the exceeding and glorious Happineſs, which the univerſal practice of Righteouſneſs would introduce upon Earth, that the Poets attempted to deſcribe it under the Fiction of the Golden-Age: And One of the beſt of their Philoſophers, ſpeaking of Univerſal Juſtice and Equity, as the Top and Perfection of all Virtues, expreſſes himſelf in the following manner; that "if This Virtue could be repreſented "viſibly to mortal Eyes, it would raiſe in us an inexpreſſible Love and Admi-"ration of it;" being in itſelf ſo truly beautiful and lovely, that even "the "Motions of the heavenly Bodies are not ſo admirably regular and harmoni-"ous, nor the Brightneſs of the Sun and Stars ſo ornamental to the viſible Fa-"brick of the World, as the univerſal Practice of this illuſtrious Virtue would "be conducive to the Glory and Happineſs of the rational part of this lower "creation." Great therefore and indiſpenſable is the obligation upon all men, to promote the univerſal Practice of Juſtice, Righteouſneſs and Equity. So that, were not men ſtrangely and moſt unnaturally corrupted, by perverſe Opinions, and ill Habits, prevailing againſt the cleareſt Reaſon; 'twould be impoſſible for any man not to be as much aſhamed of *Doing iniquity*, as he is of *Believing Contradictions*. For all *Unrighteouſneſs* is the very ſame thing in *Action*, as *Falſity* or *Contradiction* is in *Theory*; and the ſame cauſe which makes the one *abſurd*, makes the other *unreaſonable*. To compriſe the whole in one word: What the Sun's forſaking that equal courſe, which now, by diffuſing gentle Warmth and Light, cheriſhes and invigorates every thing in a due Proportion thro' the whole Syſtem; and on the contrary, his burning up, by an irregular and diſorderly Motion, ſome of the Orbs with inſupportable Heat, and leaving Others to periſh in extreme Cold and Darkneſs: What This (I ſay) would be to the *natural World*; That very ſame thing, Injuſtice and Tyranny, Iniquity and All Wickedneſs, is to the *Moral and Rational* part of the Creation: Only with This aggravating Difference; that This latter is a *perverſe and wilful* depravation of Creatures originally endued with *Knowledge and Liberty*, after the image and ſimilitude of Him that created them.

III. *Thirdly*; Having thus ſhown the *Neceſſity* of the Practice of Juſtice among Men, the *Benefits* thence *naturally* ariſing to Mankind in the *ordinary* and *neceſſary* Conſequences of Things, and the *Folly and Miſchief* of every ſort of *Iniquity*; it remains, in the Third and Laſt place, that I briefly ſet forth the *particular Reward*, which *God himſelf* has moreover, in an *extraordinary* manner, promiſed in Scripture to the practice of this General and Extenſive Virtue. Prov. iv. 18, 19; "The way of the wicked is as darkneſs, they know not "at what they ſtumble; But the path of the *Juſt* is as the ſhining Light, "which ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day. *Again, ch.* xxiv. 16; A *juſt* "man falleth ſeven times, and riſes up again; but the wicked ſhall fall into miſ-"chief." Some Commentators have been ſo abſurd, as to underſtand This Text of good men's *falling into Sin*: But the true Meaning is evidently the ſame as that of the *Pſalmiſt*, when he ſays; "Many are the *Afflictions* of the "righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all: Though he fall, he "ſhall Pſ. xxxiv. 10.

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Pſ. xxxvii. 24.

Prov. xiii. 22.

" ſhall not be utterly caſt down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. " *Again*; Job xxvii. 13, 16; This is the portion of a wicked man with God, " and the heritage of Oppreſſors which they ſhall receive from the Almighty: " —Though he heap up Silver as the Duſt, and prepare raiment as the clay; He " may prepare it, but the *Juſt* ſhall put it on, and the innocent ſhall divide the " Silver: *For* the Wealth of the Sinner, is laid up for the *Juſt*." Theſe and the like Promiſes, were very frequently, in the times of the *Old Teſtament*, fulfilled *literally* by God's providential Diſpoſition of *temporal* Bleſſings. But becauſe, even in *Thoſe* times, they were alſo often *not fulfilled*, and eſpecially in Times of Perſecution; I think it is therefore very probable, that *even Then* Thoſe Promiſes (as is evident in the caſe of *Abraham*) had a ſecret and implicit Regard to That *future State, which in the New Teſtament* is ſo *clearly and diſtinctly* revealed. The Happineſs of which future State, is by our Saviour ſo peculiarly declared to be the *Portion* and *Property* of *Juſt* men, that, as I before obſerved, the *Reſurrection unto Life* is in the Text emphatically ſtiled *Their* Reſurrection; ſo that even to thoſe who ſhall be rewarded for *Other* Virtues, the Promiſe is, that they ſhall be recompenſed *at the Reſurrection of the* Juſt. And, in the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, That *general Aſſembly and Church of the firſt-born in Heaven*, who are joined with the *innumerable company of Angels*, and with *Jeſus the Mediator of the New Covenant*, and with *God the Judge of All*; are ſtiled *the Spirits of* Juſt *men, made perfect*. And the Character given by St. *Peter* to that *New Heaven and New Earth*, which is to be the Abode of the Bleſſed, is, that *Therein dwelleth righteouſneſs*; 2 Pet. iii. 13. To which there ſeems to be a plain Alluſion, even in the *Old Teſtament*; Iſ. lx. 18, 21; " Violence ſhall no " more be heard in thy land, waſting nor deſtruction within thy borders; but " thou ſhalt call thy Walls Salvation, and thy Gates Praiſe:——Thy People " alſo ſhall be all righteous, they ſhall inherit the land for ever." And, (to mention but one obſervation more, with which I ſhall conclude;) When our Saviour was to expreſs in the loftieſt and moſt ſublime figure, the Joy that is in Heaven over a repenting Sinner; the higheſt poſſible manner in which he could expreſs it, was to ſay it was greater than *That over ninety nine* Juſt *perſons who need no repentance*. The Meaning of which is not, by any means, that a *converted Sinner* is really preferred or eſteemed in value before a man who has been *always righteous*; but that a *ſmaller good*, when recovered as it were unexpectedly and on a ſudden, cauſes greater and more immediate manifeſtations and expreſſions of *Joy*, though not of *ſettled Eſteem*, than a much more valuable Good which has been conſtantly in poſſeſſion.

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The Abounding of Iniquity the Cauſe of it's abounding more.

MAT. XXIV. 12.

And becauſe Iniquity ſhall abound, the Love of many ſhall wax cold.

THESE words are part of that brief Prophetical deſcription which our Lord gives his Diſciples of the Future State of his Church, from the time of his Aſcenſion till his final Coming to Judgment. The *Occaſion* of This Diſcourſe, was his Diſciples ſhowing him the Beautiful and Stately Buildings of the Temple at *Jeruſalem*; which, (inſtead of admiring and commending, as They ſeemed to expect,) he told them ſhould be overthrown with ſuch an utter Deſtruction, that there ſhould *not be left on ſtone upon another, that* ſhould *not be thrown down.* And hence it is, that through the whole following Prophecy, he deſcribes the Miſeries of all ſucceeding Ages, until his *Second Coming*, in phraſes borrowed from That Deſtruction of *Judæa*, which was the *Beginning of Sorrows:* Juſt as, in the *Old Teſtament*, the *Firſt Coming* of Chriſt, and the Eſtabliſhment

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bliſhment of his Religion, had been deſcribed in phraſes continually alluding to the then typical State of the *Jewiſh* Church and Nation.

The *Deſign* of this Prophecy throughout, is to withdraw the Minds of the Diſciples from Expectations of Worldly Power and Proſperity: To forewarn them of the numerous Calamities which ſhould come upon *Mankind in general* from the righteous Judgment of *God*, and upon his *own Diſciples in particular* from the manifold Wickedneſs and Unreaſonableneſs of *Men*; from the Perſecutions, Cruelty, and open Violence of *Infidels*; and from the Treachery, Deceits, and Frauds of profeſſed *Believers*; from the Oppoſition which ſhould in all Ages be made to Chriſt's Religion, by thoſe who *received* it *not*; and from the prodigious Corruptions which ſhould be introduced into it, by thoſe who pretended to *embrace* it. That therefore the true Diſciples of Chriſt, men of real *Virtue and Integrity*, in all Ages and Nations, muſt *in their Patience poſſeſs their Souls*; Luke xxi. 19: That is, muſt be content, *by patient continuance in well-doing* here, to *ſeek for glory and honour and immortality* hereafter.

This is the plain Deſign of our Lord's prophetick Diſcourſe through this whole chapter. And 'tis very remarkable concerning This and all the other Prophecies in the *New Teſtament*, as one intrinſick character or mark of the Truth and divine Authority of the whole; that whereas Impoſtors always, and Enthuſiaſts generally, in ſetting up any New Doctrine, make it their Buſineſs to raiſe the Expectation of their Followers, and to flatter their Imaginations with Promiſes of great Succeſs, and of God's interpoſing in ſome extraordinary manner to bring into their hands the Power and Dominion of this preſent World; our Lord's Promiſes, on the contrary, are all of a ſpiritual nature; Promiſes of a proper Reward for Virtue, in a future and heavenly ſtate: But that, at preſent what his true Diſciples had to expect, was *Perſecution* and *Sufferings* of all kinds: *They ſhall deliver you up to be afflicted, and ſhall kill you*, ver. 9; *and ye ſhall be hated of all Nations for my Name's ſake. And then ſhall many be offended, and ſhall betray one another, and ſhall hate one another.* And *there ſhall be great Tribulation*, ver. 21; *ſuch as was not ſince the beginning of the World to this time, no, nor ever ſhall be.* Nay, what is ſtill *more* remarkable, and more eſſentially contrary to the Spirit both of Impoſture and Enthuſiaſm; he foretels the greateſt and moſt extenſive and moſt laſting *Corruptions* of his *Own* Religion. Ver. 24; *There ſhall ariſe falſe Chriſts and falſe Prophets, and ſhall ſhew great Signs and Wonders, inſomuch that (if it were poſſible) they ſhall deceive the very Elect:* That is, Teachers of falſe Doctrine ſhall ariſe, ſupported with *Power* and *Numbers*, and Pretences of *Antiquity* and of *Miracles*, and *Univerſality*, and *Infallibility*, and *all other imaginable Marks* of the True Church; except *That One* which is *the only True one*, the Teaching of the *ſame Doctrine* without alteration that Chriſt himſelf taught. And his *Apoſtles* after him, unanimouſly foretel the ſame Events. St. *Peter*, in his *ſecond* Epiſtle, ch. iii. 3; "Knowing this firſt, "*ſays he*, that there ſhall come in the laſt days Scoffers, walking after their own "Luſts, and ſaying, Where is the Promiſe of his Coming? *And St.* Paul, *in* "*his* firſt *Epiſtle to* Timothy, ch. iv. 1; The Spirit ſpeaketh expreſsly, that in "the latter times Some ſhall depart from the Faith, giving heed to ſeducing "Spirits, and Doctrines of * Devils; Speaking Lies in hypocriſy; having "their Conſcience ſeared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abſtain from Meats, which God hath created to be received with "Thankſgiving of Them who believe and know the Truth. *And* 2 Tim. iii. 1; This know alſo, that in the laſt days perilous times ſhall come: For men "ſhall be Lovers of their own Selves, covetous, boaſters, proud, blaſphemers, "diſobedient to Parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, falſe accuſers, incontinent, fierce, deſpiſers of thoſe that are good, "traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleaſures more than lovers of God; "having a Form of Godlineſs, but denying the Power thereof.

* Doctrines of Dæmons, Doctrines about Souls departed, Invocations of Saints, Praying of Souls out of Purgatory and the like.

The *Occaſions* and *Reaſons* of theſe great and manifold Corruptions, are as various as the Corruptions themſelves. *One* in particular, is what our Lord takes notice of in the Text; that *Wickedneſs* is, in its *nature*, apt to *ſpread* and *propagate*

pagate itſelf. Not only becauſe *evil men and ſeducers* (as St. *Paul* expreſſes it) are apt to *grow worſe and worſe, deceiving and being deceived*, and continually *increaſing unto more ungodlineſs*; but moreover becauſe even Thoſe who are *well-diſpoſed*, are too often either drawn aſide by the Example, or wearied out by the Oppoſition of a vicious and corrupt World. *Becauſe Iniquity ſhall abound the Love of Many ſhall wax cold.*

In diſcourſing more particularly upon which words, I ſhall obſerve, 1*ſt*, the *Suppoſition* our Lord here lays down as certain, that the World *will* generally be very wicked; and that, notwithſtanding all the means which God has thought fit to make uſe of even in this laſt diſpenſation of the Goſpel, ſtill *Iniquity ſhall* continue and *abound*. 2*dly*; I ſhall conſider how very naturally, among *Other* cauſes of Corruption, even *This* very thing, the *abounding of Iniquity*, is *itſelf* a proper and direct *Cauſe* of its *increaſing* and *abounding more*: *Becauſe Iniquity ſhall abound* therefore *the Love of Many ſhall wax cold*. 3*dly*; I ſhall ſhow, that though in fact it is ſo, yet in Truth and Reaſon there is no real Ground or Foundation why it *ſhould* be ſo; Nor is it any juſt Excuſe for any man's Wickedneſs, that Others have been wicked before him. 4*thly*, and in the *laſt* place; I ſhall draw ſome *Practical Inferences* from the Whole of what has been ſaid.

I. *Firſt*; Our Lord here lays down the *Suppoſition* as certain, that the World generally *will* be wicked; and that, notwithſtanding all the means which God has thought fit to make uſe of even in this Laſt Diſpenſation of the Goſpel, ſtill *Iniquity ſhall* continue and *abound*. The Wickedneſs of the World, that is the *Unreaſonable* Behaviour of men naturally endued with *Reaſon*; has continually been matter of Complaint, in all Ages and in all Nations, among conſiderate perſons even in the *Heathen* World. In the *Sacred Writings*, the Corruption of Manners in the *Ages before the Flood*, is Thus deſcribed, Gen. vi. 5; *God ſaw that the Wickedneſs of Man was great in the Earth, and that every imagination of the Thoughts of his Heart was only Evil continually*. In *Solomon*'s time, the Deſcription That Wiſe Obſerver gives of the State of Mankind, is This: Eccles. i. 14; *I have ſeen all the Works that are done under the Sun; and behold.—that which is crooked cannot be made ſtraight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbred*: That is; Men's *Defects* in what is *Good*, are innumerable; and their *Practices* of what is *Ill*, are incorrigible. In the times of the *Apocryphal Books*, the expectation of what was to come, is Thus expreſſed; 2 Eſdr. v. 2, 10; and xv. 6; *Iniquity ſhall be increaſed above that which thou now ſeeſt, or that thou haſt heard long ago. Underſtanding ſhall be ſought of Many, and yet not be found; then ſhall unrighteouſneſs and incontinency be multiplied upon Earth. For Wickedneſs has exceedingly polluted the whole Earth, and their hurtful Works are fulfilled.* And in the times under the *New Teſtament*, whatever Expectations many of the Diſciples might flatter themſelves withal; yet *our Lord* very plainly and expreſsly, both in this whole Chapter and upon many other Occaſions, aſſures them that *Offences* will *come*; that *Iniquity ſhall* long *prevail* upon Earth; that particularly upon *his own Diſciples* ſhould fall Many and Long *Tribulations*, both by means of *Perſecution* from *Unbelievers*, and by means of Great and Laſting *Corruptions* which ſhould ariſe among *Themſelves*; That all theſe things *muſt needs* be; and that therefore men ought not to be *ſurprized* when they find them come to paſs, foraſmuch as he had plainly *told* them of theſe things *beforehand*, and warned them that *in* their *Patience* they muſt *poſſeſs* their *Souls*. This, in *Fact* is too plainly the Caſe. But the particular *Reaſons why* the unerring Wiſdom of God thinks fit to *permit* it thus to be, are what *We* who live in ſo *ſmall* a portion of *Time* and *Place*, and have *Capacities* proportional only to this preſent State, ſhall not perhaps be fully acquainted with, till the great and final Day of Accounts. *This* only, *in general*, we know by the *Light of Nature and Reaſon*; that men being endued with *Liberty of Will*, and being *frail and fallible*, and ſubject to *many Temptations*; it cannot, morally ſpeaking, come to paſs otherwiſe, but that Great Numbers will always be governed by their *Paſſions* more than by their *Reaſon*; which is the eſſence of all Wickedneſs. And by *Revelation*

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lation we are assured further, *in particular*; that *One Reason* why these things *must needs be*, that is, why God does not think fit to interpose by his Supreme Power to hinder their being; is, that *Many* may *be purified, and made white, and tried*; and that *They that are approved, may be made manifest*. And This concerning the *Supposition* our Lord here lays down as certain; that, in fact, *Iniquity* will continue and *abound*.

II. *Secondly*; I am to consider how very naturally, among *Other* Causes of Corruption, even *This* very thing, the *abounding of Iniquity*, is *itself* a proper and direct *Cause* of its *increasing and Abounding more*. Our Lord, in his Parable of the Ten Virgins, observes, that *while the Bridegroom tarried, they all*, (the Wise, as well as the Foolish,) *slumbered and slept*. The *Wise* were not so watchful as they ought to have been, to be ready always against their Lord's Coming; but their Lamps wanted trimming: And the *Foolish*, let *Theirs* go quite *out*. From This *Negligence*, a man easily proceeds by degrees to think within himself, like that *wicked Servant* in the Gospel; *my Lord* delayeth *his Coming*: And thereupon he becomes *tyrannical* to his *Fellow-servants*, and *begins to eat and drink with the drunken*. Having gone on in which Course for some time, and found himself to prosper in his Vices; he concludes at length, that his Lord will not come *at all*; that the Threatnings of God are but empty Terrours, and that there is no such thing as a *Day of Judgment*. A *Succession* of Wicked men, seeing One *Age* pass quietly on after another, and that the World goes on after the same manner *from generation to generation*; confirm themselves still *more and more* in their Hopes of Impunity, by *This* consideration; saying, *Where is the Promise of his Coming? for since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the Beginning of the Creation*. Besides; Wicked men, not only escaping frequently with impunity, but Sometimes (and not unusually too) arriving at the highest degrees of *Power and Prosperity* in the World; furnish inconsiderate persons with continual Arguments against the Divine Providence; with such Arguments as caused even the Psalmist himself to say, Ps. lxxiii. 2; "My feet were almost gone, my Treadings had well-nigh "slipt: Because I was grieved at the wicked, I do also see the ungodly in "such Prosperity. *And the Prophet* Jeremy, ch. xii. 1; Wherefore doth the "way of the Wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy, that deal very "treacherously?" Then further; the very *Shame* of not following the *Fashion* of a *corrupt World*, in times of great degeneracy, withdraws Many from their Duty, from their Adherence to Truth and Virtue, and seduces them into mean and unworthy Compliances. Concerning which, the Son of *Sirach* speaks, Eccles. iv. 21; "There is a Shame, that bringeth Sin: — Accept no person a-"gainst thy Soul, and let not the Reverence of any man cause thee to fall. But what our Lord seems *principally* to intend here in the Text, is to admonish and forewarn his Disciples, that men would be discouraged and *wearied out* by degrees in their Concern for Religion, by the various sorts of *Persecution* they should meet with from *Unbelievers*, and by the yet more strange *Corruptions* that should by Christians be introduced among *Themselves*. In the Parable of the *Sower*, Matt. xiii. 20, he describes *Some* persons, as *hearing the word, and anon with joy receiving it; yet not having root in themselves, but during for a while: For when Tribulation or Persecution ariseth because of the Word, by and by they are offended*. That is, as he expresses it in the words before my Text, ver. 9; "*When* they shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you, and ye shall "be hated of all Nations for my Name's sake; Then shall Many be offended, "and shall betray one another,——and the Love of many shall wax cold. But the Other, and (as I said) still greater and more strange Cause of the Same Effect, is, the *Corruptions* our Lord foretells should be introduced among the *Professors Themselves* of his *Own* Religion; *Many false Prophets shall arise, and shall deceive Many*. *And because*, by *This means* likewise, *Iniquity shall abound*; therefore (says he) *the love of many shall wax cold*. There shall arise persons (as St. *Paul* at large describes them, 2 *Thess.* ii. 10,) *with all* possible *deceivableness of Unrighteousness*. That is: They shall have *all possible Marks and Notes*, of the true Church

of

of Chriſt; excepting *That alone*, without which all other Marks are nothing; namely the uncorrupt *Worſhip* of the *One true God of the Univerſe*, and the real Practice of univerſal *Equity and Goodneſs* towards *Men*. All *Other* Signs and Wonders, being conſiſtent with *idolatrous* and with *unrighteous* Practices, are but ſo many different Methods of *Deceit*; of *teaching*, for *Commandments of God*, the *Doctrines of Men*; leaving the plain *Foundation* of *Chriſt*, and introducing into Religion, matters of *doubtful diſputation*, matters which *gender Striſe* and *Contention*, Doctrines either impoſſible or difficult to be *underſtood*, and *Practices* either directly *unlawful*, or extremely *ſuſpicious*; Which can be ſupported only by *Force* and *Violence*, by Means eſſentially inconſiſtent with the very *Nature* and *Being* of Religion. The natural Conſequence of all which things muſt needs be, that men will be led to look upon Religion in general as a mere Fiction, or at leaſt as a thing uncertain and above Their Capacities to underſtand; about which conſequently it cannot poſſibly be Their Duty to have any Concern. Thus the *abounding of Iniquity*, is *itſelf* a proper and direct *Cauſe*, of its *increaſing and abounding more*.

But though, in *Fact*, it *is* ſo; yet in *Truth and Reaſon*, (which is what I propoſed to ſhow in the *Third* place,)

III. There is no real Ground or Foundation why it *ſhould* be ſo; Nor is it any juſt Excuſe for any man's Wickedneſs, that Others have been Wicked before him. The *Nature of Things* is not altered by the *Opinions of Men*, much leſs by the *Practices* of the vicious and corrupt part of the World. There *is* ſuch a thing as *Truth* and *Right*, founded in the *Nature of Things* and in the *Will of God*; and there is ſuch a thing as *Reaſon*, or a Power of unprejudiced *Attention* implanted in Men, by which they are enabled to find it out: Which is what our Saviour calls *having Ears to hear*. To be led into Wickedneſs by the *Shame* of being *unfaſhionable*, and by the Influence of *Great Examples*; is directly *eſteeming the Praiſe of Men*, more than the *Praiſe of God*. To be ſhocked at the preſent *Proſperity* of the *Wicked*, is to forget the firſt Principle and Foundation of the Doctrine of Chriſt, that *God hath appointed a Day* hereafter, *wherein he will judge the World in righteouſneſs*. To be diſturbed at things going on in the ſame manner from generation to generation, as if our *Lord delayed his Coming*; is to be ignorant that *one day is with God as a thouſand years, and a thouſand years as one day*; and that, in due ſeaſon, *he that ſhall come, will come, and will not tarry*.. To be *offended* and *think ſtrange* of the *Perſecutions* and *Diſcouragements*, which at different times and in different manners fall upon good men; is to be inſenſible of the repeated Declarations of our Saviour, that theſe things *muſt* needs be; that whoſoever *will be* His *Diſciple*, *muſt* (in ſome degree or other) *take up his Croſs and follow* Him. For in a corrupt World, *All* (as St. *Paul* expreſſes it) *that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus, ſhall ſuffer Perſecution*; (ſhall meet at leaſt with *many* Reproaches, Inconveniences, and Diſcouragements, upon account of their adherence to Truth and Right;) 2 *Tim.* iii. 12. Laſtly; To be ſhaken and unſettled, upon account of the *High Pretenſions* of different *Doctrines*, and matters of *Diſpute* in Religion; is likewiſe being unattentive to the expreſs Prediction and Caution of our Saviour, Matt. xxiv. 25; "Behold, *ſaith he*, I have told you before: "There ſhall ariſe falſe Chriſts and falſe Prophets, and ſhall ſhow great Signs "and Wonders:——Wherefore, if they ſhall ſay unto you, behold, he is in "the Deſart; go not forth; behold, he is in the Secret chambers; believe it "not." His Meaning is: The True Doctrine of Chriſt, the *Everlaſting Goſpel*, is very plain even to the meaneſt Capacities; conſiſting in the *Worſhip of the One True God*, which is the *Firſt and Great Commandment*; and in the Practice of univerſal *Equity and Good-will* towards *Men*, which is the *Second* and *Like unto it*. If any man *will do his Will*, that is, will be *honeſt and ſincere*, he ſhall eaſily *know of This Doctrine*, that *it is of God*. For *the Foundation of God ſtandeth ſure, having This Seal*; *Let every one that nameth the Name of Chriſt, depart from Iniquity*.

IV.

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IV. *Fourthly*; The *Inferences* from what has been ſaid, are briefly as follows.

1ſt; From hence it clearly appears, how abſurdly thoſe of the Church of *Rome*, inſtead of attending to the intrinſick *Nature* of the *Doctrine*, and to the real *Evidence* of the *Facts*, alledge Temporal Grandeur, and Power, and Authority, and Viſibility, and Univerſality of Extent, and the like, as Marks of *Truth* in matters of Religion; directly contrary to the whole Tenour of our Saviour's Diſcourſe, both in *This Chapter*, and through the whole Goſpel.

2dly; Another proper Inference from what has been ſaid, is That which our Lord himſelf drew from this Diſcourſe to his Diſciples, as recorded by St. *Luke*, ch. xxi. 19; *In your Patience poſſeſs ye your Souls.* A good Chriſtian, a man that will perſiſt in his adherence to Truth and Virtue, muſt be content, in the midſt of a vicious and corrupt World, *by* patient *continuance in well-doing* to *ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality.* We muſt ſubmit to follow the Example of Chriſt: *Conſidering Him* (as the Apoſtle admoniſhes, *Heb.* xii. 3;) *who endured ſuch contradiction of Sinners againſt Himſelf; leſt we be wearied and faint in our Minds.*

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SERMON LXII.

The Wickedneſs of Chriſtians no Argument againſt Chriſtianity.

GAL. ii. 17.

But if, while we ſeek to be juſtified by Chriſt, we ourſelves alſo are found Sinners; is therefore Chriſt the Miniſter of Sin? God forbid.

ONE of the greateſt and moſt plauſible Objections alledged by Unbelievers againſt the divine Inſtitution of the Chriſtian Religion; is the ſmallneſs of the *influence* it may ſeem to have, upon the Lives and Manners of its Profeſſors. It were natural to expect, if God condeſcended to give men an *expreſs revealed Law*, and to ſend ſo extraordinary a perſon as his *own Son* to promulgate That Law upon Earth; it were natural to expect, it ſhould have ſome very *viſible* and remarkable *Effect* in the World, anſwerable to the *Dignity* of the *Thing* itſelf, and worthy of its *Great Author*. They who were bleſſed with ſuch *ſingular* Advantages, *What*

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manner of perſons (as St. *Peter* expreſſes it) *ought they to be, in all holy converſation and godlineſs?* And, *are* there then (will Unbelievers be apt to ſay;) *are* there to be met withal, in the Lives and Manners of Chriſtians, any conſiderable Marks or diſtinguiſhing Characters, by which it might be judged that they are really under the Influence and peculiar Guidance of ſuch a divine Director? Is there, among thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians, leſs of profaneneſs and impiety towards *God*, leſs of Fraud, Injuſtice and Unrighteouſneſs towards *Men*, than among the Profeſſors of other Religions? Is there not too plainly the ſame boundleſs *Ambition*, the ſame inſatiable *Covetouſneſs*, the ſame *Voluptuouſneſs* and *Debauchery of Manners*, to be found among *Them*, as among *Other* men? Nay, have not *moreover* the Pretences even of *Religion itſelf*, been the *immediate and direct* Occaſion of the bittereſt and moſt implacable *Animoſities*, of the cruelleſt and moſt bloody *Wars*, of the moſt barbarous and inhuman *Perſecutions?* Have not the greateſt *Vices* and *Immoralities* of all kinds, received too plain an Encouragement, from the reliance upon a Power of repeating continually certain regular and periodical *Abſolutions*; and, much more, from an Imagination that the Practices of a vicious life may be compenſated before God by the Obſervance of certain weak and ridiculous Ceremonies, and made amends for by Superſtitious Commutations? Laſtly, and beyond all this, hath not even the *Grace of God*, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, been itſelf too frequently *turned into Wantonneſs?* That is: Hath not the great and fundamental Grace of the Goſpel, the gracious Promiſe of Pardon upon true Repentance and Amendment, been itſelf abuſed into an Encouragement of Wicked Living, in a dependence upon the Formalities of a Death-bed Repentance? Very *great*, and very *juſt* Reproaches indeed are theſe, upon Many who profeſs themſelves to be *Followers of Chriſt*. But that ſuch Objections have no concluſive Conſequence at all againſt Chriſtianity itſelf; is what the Apoſtle, after a very affectionate manner, declares in the words of the Text: *If, while we ſeek to be juſtified by Chriſt, we ourſelves alſo are found Sinners; is therefore Chriſt the Miniſter of Sin? God forbid: For if I build again the things which I deſtroyed, I make my ſelf a Tranſgreſſor:* If Chriſtianity be made a *Support*, to That which it was ultimately and eſſentially intended to *deſtroy*; it is no longer Chriſtianity, but a wicked and inconſiſtent Abuſe of that Sacred Name and Character.

In diſcourſing therefore upon theſe words, I ſhall endeavour to ſhow, 1*ſt*, That the Wickedneſs of the Lives of thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians, is no Argument at all againſt the Truth and Excellency of the Chriſtian Religion itſelf. 2*dly*, That the Practice however of Any wickedneſs, though it afford no real Argument againſt Chriſtianity itſelf, yet is Matter of very great and juſt Reproach to the Profeſſors of this Holy Religion, as being the utmoſt Contradiction and the higheſt poſſible Inconſiſtency with their Profeſſion. 3*dly*, That hence conſequently we have a very plain and eaſy Rule, to judge of the Malignity and Dangerouſneſs of Any Errour in matters of Religion: In proportion as the Errour tends to reconcile Any Vicious Practice with the Profeſſion of Religion, or (as the Text expreſſes it) to make *Chriſt the Miniſter of Sin*; in the ſame proportion is the *Doctrine* pernicious, and the *Teachers* of it juſtly to be deemed Corrupt.

I. *Firſt*; The Wickedneſs of the Lives of Thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians, is no Argument at all againſt the Truth and Excellency of the Chriſtian Religion itſelf. *Natural* and *Neceſſary Cauſes*, always and neceſſarily produce *Effects* proportional to their natural Powers; ſo that from the Degree or Quantity of the *Effect*, may always certainly be judged the degree of Power and Efficacy in the *Cauſe*. But in *Moral* Cauſes, the Caſe is neceſſarily and eſſentially otherwiſe. In *Theſe*, how efficacious ſoever the *Cauſe* be, yet the *Effect* always depends on the *Will* of the perſon, upon whom the Effect is to be worked, whether the *Cauſe* ſhall at all produce its *proper Effect*, or no. The Chriſtian Religion affords men the moſt Perfect *Inſtructions* poſſible, in the ways of *Virtue*; and *Arguments* infinitely ſtrong, to enforce the *Practice* of it. The *Effect* of this doctrine upon the Lives of men, in the *Primitive* times, before World-

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ly Corruptions entered into the Church; was very Great and Conſpicuous. And, if *We* underſtand the Prophecies *rightly*, which relate to things *yet to come*; this Effect will be ſtill much more remarkable, in the *Latter Ages*; when the Corruptions, which Now prevail among Chriſtians, ſhall be reformed; "*and* the Earth ſhall be full of the Knowledge of the "Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea." As things *at preſent* ſtand there are great Numbers of men, many more than are taken notice of in the Noiſe and Hurry of the moſt Buſy part of the World; who, upon the Foundation of a firm and well-ſettled Belief in the Goſpel of Chriſt, go on regularly and conſtantly in the courſe of a ſober, honeſt, and virtuous life; with a perpetual uniform ſenſe of God upon their Minds, and an aſſured expectation of a future judgment. And even among Thoſe who value themſelves upon *deſpiſing* the aſſiſtance of *Revelation*, and rely entirely upon their own natural Abilities in matters of Religion; it is very plain, that the greateſt part of thoſe right Notions concerning God and Virtue, about which they can now ſo readily and ſo clearly diſcourſe, are really almoſt wholly borrowed from the Light of *That Revelation*, which they are deſirous ſhould be thought entirely needleſs. This, I ſay, is very plain and evident, from the extreme Darkneſs and Ignorance wherewith the *Heathen World* is univerſally overſpread, notwithſtanding there are not wanting among them men of excellent natural Abilities; and from the right Notions of God and Virtue to be found among *Chriſtians*, in Numbers of Perſons even of the loweſt Capacities and of the meaneſt Employments, to a degree which Few, exceeding Few, even of the greateſt and moſt eminent *Philoſophers*, were ever able to arrive at. So very different a thing is it, to ſee and diſcern the Reaſonableneſs of Moral Obligations, *after* they have been once clearly revealed; and to be able, without any aſſiſtance, to diſcover *at firſt*, the ſame Obligations, by the mere Strength of Nature and Reaſon. But however This be; and ſuppoſing the *Effect* of Chriſtianity in the World, had been much ſmaller than it has been; ſtill, I ſay, This would be no argument at all againſt the Truth and Excellency of the Doctrine itſelf; becauſe, (as I now obſerved,) in all *Moral* Cauſes, it does and muſt always depend on the *Will* of the perſon, upon whom the Effect is to be worked, whether even the moſt powerful and efficacious Cauſe ſhall at all produce its proper *Effect*, or No. When *God himſelf* calls men, in the ſtrongeſt and moſt efficacious manner that is conſiſtent with his calling them at all; it is ſtill in their own power, not to hearken to that Call, not to be in any reſpect the *better* for it, nay, to be the *worſe* for it, much *worſe* than if they had *never known the way of Righteouſneſs*. For as, *where no Law is, there is no Tranſgreſſion*; ſo on the other ſide, and for the ſame reaſon, where there *is* a Law, not obeyed, That *Law worketh wrath*; and *Sin, by this commandment*, becomes *exceeding ſinful*. Were therefore the *Effect* always to be the Meaſure, in judging of the Goodneſs and Excellency of a *Cauſe*; the *beſt* and *wiſeſt Laws* would often, upon account of their very Excellency, be the *worſt*. The *Law* of *God*, would be chargeable with the *Malignity* of *Sin*; and *God himſelf*, as the real and immediate Author of *Evil*: Rom. vii. 10; *The Commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto Death: For Sin, taking occaſion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it ſlew me:* ——*Working Death in me by that which is good*; *that Sin, by the commandment, might become exceeding ſinful*. And the ſame may, in proportion, be ſaid concerning *Reaſon* itſelf, even the *abſolute* and *neceſſary Reaſon* of *Things*. The *more* we are ſenſible of the *reaſonableneſs* and *neceſſity* of Moral Obligations, the *worſe* is our condition if we act *unreaſonably*. Yet *Reaſon* is of *eſſential Excellency*, eternally and immutably; being the neceſſary Reſult of the Nature and Truth of Things: And the *Commandments* of *God who cannot err*, are always *Holy and Juſt and Good*; Rom. vii. 12. If therefore it be no Objection againſt the Excellency of *Reaſon itſelf*, that it very often is *not able* to make men act *reaſonably*; and no diminution to the *Divine Commandments in general*, that they frequently not only fail of reforming mens Manners, but even on the contrary do moreover make Sin to become the more exceedingly ſinful: then, for the ſame reaſon, neither againſt the Truth and Excellency

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of *Chriſtianity in particular* can any Argument be drawn, from the Wickedneſs of the Lives of Thoſe who profeſs themſelves Chriſtians. But

II. *Secondly*; Though the Practice of *Any Wickedneſs* whatſoever, affords no real Argument againſt *Chriſtianity itſelf*, yet it is always matter of very great and juſt Reproach to the *Profeſſors* of this *Holy Religion*, as being the utmoſt Contradiction and the higheſt poſſible Inconſiſtency with their Profeſſion. The *Deſign* and *End* of Chriſt's Religion, is to *amend* and *reform* the Manners of Men; that he might *purify to himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good Works*; a people, who might *ſhine as Lights* in the World, by the *exemplary* Practice of all *Virtue and Goodneſs*. Every *Vice*, that any *Chriſtian* is guilty of, has a tendency to defeat this great End; and brings diſhonour upon the Name, and upon the Religion of Chriſt. For whenever Chriſtians appear wicked and corrupt in their manners, "the Name of God is blaſphemed among the Gentiles, through "Them, as it is written; *Rom.* ii. 24:" That is, Unbelievers are confirmed in their Infidelity, and Scoffers are encouraged to make a Scorn of Religion. Juſt as the *Jews* of old, who perpetually ſtiled themſelves the *People of God*, and yet fell into the Vices of the Heathen Nations. Concerning whom the Prophet complains, "Ezek. xxxvi. 20; When they entered unto the Heathen "whither they went, they profaned my Holy name, when they ſaid to them, "Theſe are the people of the Lord, and are gone forth out of his Land." It *muſt needs* indeed happen, corrupt as the nature of mankind is, that ſuch *Offences* as theſe *will come*: That is, among numbers of men, endued with liberty of Will, and liable to many Temptations, it cannot be expected, notwithſtanding all the Means and Aſſiſtances of the Goſpel, it cannot be expected but Some men will be wicked and incorrigible. But *wo be* to That man, ſaith our Saviour, *through whom* the *Offence cometh*. Every ſuch perſon, whatever his *Profeſſion* be, is an Enemy to Chriſt, and a Reproach to his Religion. *Little children*, ſaith St. *John*, "let no man deceive you——He that committeth Sin, is of "the Devil: *and*——Whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs, is not of God;" 1 Joh. iii. 7, 8, 10. *Every Vice* therefore *whatſoever*, that any *Chriſtian* is guilty of, has (I ſay) *in general* a Tendency to defeat the great End and Deſign of Chriſtianity; and brings Diſhonour upon the Name, and upon the Religion of Chriſt. But when any thing which is a *part* of the Chriſtian Doctrine, is *itſelf in particular* made a direct *Ground* and immediate *Cauſe* of Wickedneſs; the caſe *then* is infinitely *worſe*, and the *Reproach* unſpeakably *greater*. When the Goſpel is not only rendered *ineffectual* to *prevent* Sin, but *Chriſt* (as the Apoſtle in the Text expreſſes it) made to be *Himſelf* the *Miniſter of Sin*; this is what St. *Jude* calls *Turning the Grace of God into Laſciviouſneſs*; or, in St. *Peter's* language, it is, by means of the very *Promiſe of Liberty*, making men the *Servants of Corruption*. Of this kind were Thoſe in the Apoſtle's days, who *ſaid Let us do evil, that good may come*; *Whoſe damnation is juſt*; Rom. iii. Of the ſame ſort were Thoſe, who, becauſe the Apoſtle had taught them, *Ye are not under the law, but under grace*, ch. vi. 14; thought they might the more ſafely indulge themſelves in *Sin*, for that they were *not under the law, but under grace*, ver. 15; And becauſe the Apoſtle, extolling the Mercy and Compaſſion of God, had affirmed that, *where Sin abounded, Grace did much more abound*, ch. v. 20; therefore they concluded, *ch.* vi. 1, that they might *continue in Sin, that Grace might abound*. And of the ſame kind are Thoſe Chriſtians at *All Times* and in *All Places*, who, upon any pretence whatſoever, ſet up *Any Expedients*, of whatever ſort they be, either in point of Doctrine or Practice; as *Equivalents* to be accepted of God, in the ſtead of Virtue and true Goodneſs. Concerning whom our Saviour ſpeaks, St. *Matt.* v. 19; *Whoſoever ſhall break one of theſe leaſt Commandments, and ſhall teach men ſo*; (that is, whoſoever ſhall upon any pretence, or by any doctrine whatſoever, diminiſh the neceſſity of *Moral* Virtue;) *he ſhall be called the Leaſt in the Kingdom of Heaven*; that is, (as it would Now be expreſſed in *Modern* language, (ſuch a one ſhall *Leaſt of all men* ever be admitted there, or, of all men he ſhall be *the Laſt* that will ever be received into the Kingdom of God. We uſually and very juſtly expoſe the

Ver. 4. 2 Pet. ii. 19.

the Folly of *Popiſh* Superſtition, when we hear of their dreſſing up the Bodies of Men *departed*, in the *Cloaths* and *Habit* of ſome particular *Monaſtick Order*; for the greater Security of their departed Souls, after having lived a vicious and profane life. All Superſtitions are not *equally ridiculous*: But the *Deceit* is the very ſame, and equally *Fatal*, when *Proteſtants*, when Chriſtians of *Any denomination*, teach men to expect Salvation by means of *any Expedient whatſoever*, by means of any thing which an *Immoral* perſon can poſſibly do for himſelf, or which any other perſon can poſſibly do for him; by his fiercely adhering to the Doctrines or Practices of Any Sect whatſoever, by his preſumptuouſly relying upon the Merits of Chriſt himſelf, or by any other Method whatſoever; ſo long as he continues really in the number of Thoſe, concerning whom our Lord has declared and earneſtly warned us, that, whatever Acknowledgments and Profeſſions they may make in *calling him, Lord, Lord*; and whatever Hopes they may flatter themſelves withal, in having *propheſied* and *even worked Miracles in his Name*; ſtill he will profeſs unto them at the Great Day, *I never knew you; Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.* SERM. LXII.

III. *Thirdly*; The *Third* and *Laſt* thing I propoſed to ſhow, was, that from what has been ſaid, there ariſes a very plain and eaſy Rule, by which we may judge of the Malignity and Dangerouſneſs of Any Errour in Matters of Religion. In proportion as the Errour tends to reconcile Any Vicious Practice with the Profeſſion of Religion, or (as the Text expreſſes it) to make *Chriſt the Miniſter of Sin*; in the ſame proportion is the *Doctrine* pernicious, and the *Teachers* of it juſtly to be deemed Corrupt. And This is the Reaſon, why our Lord, when he warns Chriſtians to beware of *Falſe Teachers*, who ſhould come to them *in Sheeps cloathing*, but *inwardly they were ravening Wolves*; gives us this One Mark only, by which for ever to diſtinguiſh them; *By their Fruits ye ſhall know them.* All *other* Teſts, may poſſibly be deceitful: Fair Speeches, Great Learning and Abilities, Fervent Zeal, Numbers, Authority, ſtrict Obſervance of Ceremonies, even Worldly Auſterities, and the Appearances of the moſt devotional Piety; all theſe may poſſibly accompany a very *Falſe* and very *Wicked* Religion. But the *Fruits* of *Virtue* and *True Goodneſs*, theſe are *Marks* which admit *No Counterfeit.* If the courſe of a man's Life, be virtuous and charitable; and his *Doctrine* leads men towards no Superſtition; towards nothing but Virtue and Juſtice and Goodneſs and Charity, in expectation of That righteous Judgment to come, which the Light of Nature itſelf gave men reaſon to look for, and which God has Now aſſured abſolutely by the Goſpel of Chriſt; This is a *Mark* or *Character*, to which nothing has *any ſimilitude*, but what is itſelf really and truly the *ſame.* All *other* Doctrines and Pretences of Religion, may poſſibly be very *conſiſtent* with making *Chriſt the Miniſter of Sin.* If they be *ſo*, they are at beſt *uncertain* or *uſeleſs* Doctrines; and if they have any direct *Tendency* to *encourage* and *promote* this *Evil*, then it is infallibly certain that they are *Falſe* and *Pernicious.* Hence (for Inſtance) we may very eaſily know, what judgment we ought to frame of Thoſe, who at any time ſet themſelves againſt the Uſe of *Reaſon* in matters of Religion; making a principal part of the Obedience of the Goſpel, to conſiſt in profeſſing confidently to *believe*, and in zealouſly contending to *maintain*, certain *opinions* whereof they have *No underſtanding*; Which is evidently the *eaſieſt* thing in the World, for the *wickedeſt* and moſt *worthleſs* of men to do. By the ſame Rule may eaſily be underſtood the true nature and ground of all thoſe inhumane *Perſecutions*, practiſed by the Church of *Rome* under Pretences of Religion in *ſuch* a manner, as if they thought the *Deſign* of the *Son of man's Coming*, was not to *ſave mens lives*, but to *deſtroy them*; and as if they underſtood *That Prophecy* of his, not concerning an *eventual corruption*, but concerning the real *End and Intent* of his Religion; *Think not that I am come to ſend Peace upon Earth*; *I came not to ſend Peace, but a Sword.* By the ſame Rule likewiſe it is obvious to judge, of what dangerous conſequence muſt be thoſe *Confeſſions to the Prieſt*, and formal *Abſolutions* repeated in a perpetual Circle; by which, Men may for ever be *Penitents*, without ever *Repenting*; and be continually *doing Penance*, without ever

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ver *amending* their Lives and Manners *at all*. Which manner of applying what they call the *Sacraments of the Church*, is (I think) what St. *John* ſtyles by that ſevere name of *Sorcery*, in his deſcription of thoſe *corruptions of religion*, by which *All Nations* were in the latter days to be *deceived*; Rev. xviii. 23. It will not be eaſy to find any other ſort of Sorcery, by which whole Nations of Men who call themſelves Chriſtians, can be ſhown to have been deceived. Laſtly; by the ſame Rule may no leſs plainly be diſcerned, how great and fatal a Deceit it is, which among *Proteſtants alſo* has but too generally prevailed; when confeſſing their Sins to *God himſelf*, in like manner as the *Romaniſts* do to the *Prieſt*, they look upon themſelves *abſolved in courſe*, and return to the Practice of the ſame Sins again; grounding perverſely, upon the *gracious Promiſes* of the Goſpel, a falſe and deluſive notion of *Repentance*; very much like to *That* of Thoſe in the Apoſtles days, who *continued in Sin, that Grace might abound*. Which is *deſtroying* the very *Nature* and *Neceſſity* of *Virtue*. It is the higheſt *contempt* and *mockery* of *God*, to turn his very *Mercy* into an Encouragement of *Diſobedience*. It is, inſtead of *reforming* the World, actually *corrupting* it, and literally making *Chriſt* the *Miniſter* of *Sin*.

SERMON

SERMON LXIII.

GOD will reward all Men according to their Deserts.

REV. xxii. 11, 12.

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still: And behold, I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to give every man according as his Work shall be.

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AND are we then to imagine, that God has at last no concern whether Men be righteous or wicked? whether the Unjust repents, or continues to be unjust still? No: His declaring that he *will reward* every man according to his Works, evidently shows the contrary: And his warning them of the *Suddenness* of his coming to distribute those Rewards, is a yet *more* earnest call to Repentance: And an Argument *still more* pressing than either of the former, is this very declaration, this additional threatning, that even *before* his coming, if they continue obstinate, he will forsake

SERM. LXIII. sake and leave them to the effects of their own Wickedneſs; *He that is unjuſt, let him be unjuſt ſtill.* There is no place in the whole inſpired writings, wherein is given a nobler and more majeſtick deſcription of God's dealings with Mankind, than in the Words now read unto you. God repreſents himſelf as the great Judge and Diſpoſer of all things, ſitting *in the circuit of Heaven*, (as it is expreſſed, *Job.* xxii. 14;) that is, being eſſentially preſent every where, beholding all the Actions of Men, obſerving all their Deſigns, conſidering all their Thoughts and Intentions; weighing all their Deſerts, and reſolving to reward every man according to his Works; Declaring this his Intention by the Arguments of Reaſon, by the Dictates of Nature and Conſcience, by the Voice of the Law, by the Declarations of the Prophets, by the Preaching of the Goſpel, by the perpetual Exhortations of his Apoſtles and Miniſters; Warning Men of the Suddenneſs of his coming to Judgment, that they may be always prepared and not ſurprized in their Sins; exhorting the Righteous to perſevere in their Obedience, and to improve continually in the Practice of Virtue; and denouncing to the obſtinately Wicked and Impenitent, that if they will not be brought to a timely Repentance, by thoſe Motives of Religion he has thought fit to afford them, he will give them up to themſelves to eat the Fruit of their own ways, and to be filled with their own Devices. *He that is unjuſt, let him be unjuſt ſtill; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy ſtill.* As our Goodneſs extendeth not to *Him*; ſo neither doth our Wickedneſs or Malice; It is not for his *own* ſake, but for *ours*, that God commands us to be religious; nor does our Profaneneſs and Impiety hurt *Him* at all, but *ourſelves* only. If therefore men *will* be wicked, after all reaſonable means have been made uſe of for their Conviction; nothing is more fit, nothing more becoming the Supreme Governour of all things, than to give them over to continue in their Wickedneſs: Nor can Any Puniſhment be more proper and equitable, if men *will* be *unjuſt* in defiance of all the Arguments of the Goſpel, in contempt of all the Mercies and all the Judgments of God; than to *let* them *be unjuſt ſtill.*

Our Saviour in this and the foregoing Chapter gives St. *John* in his Viſion a Proſpect of the Heavenly *Jeruſalem*; that is, repreſents to him the inexpreſſible Happineſs of the Bleſſed in their future ſtate, under the figurative deſcripti- of a City whoſe Walls were precious Stones, and her Streets and Buildings of pure Gold; which had no need of the Sun, neither of the Moon to ſhine in it; for the Glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof; where the Servants of God ſhall perpetually ſee his face, and his Name ſhall be in their foreheads: The Literal meaning of which figurative expreſſions, is in part ſet down, *ch.* xxi. 3; "Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and he will "dwell with them, and they ſhall be his people, and God himſelf ſhall be with "them, and be their God; And God ſhall wipe away all tears from their Eyes, "and there ſhall be no more Death, neither Sorrow nor Crying, neither ſhall "there be any more pain; for the former things are paſſed away." Which being but a very imperfect Repreſentation of that happy ſtate, whoſe enjoyments conſiſt in things whereof at preſent we have no Idea's, and which conſequently cannot be deſcribed to us by Words; therefore our Saviour in the following part of that xxi*ſt* Chapter and the beginning of this xxii*d*, proceeds to repreſent the Happineſs of the Heavenly State, under the Similitude of ſuch things, which being according to our preſent Apprehenſion the moſt valuable, are proper to raiſe in us a Figurative Notion of the Greatneſs of that Happineſs, whoſe true and literal deſcription we are not in this imperfect ſtate capable of comprehending. Immediately after which, that the *remoteneſs* or *diſtance* of the Object might not diminiſh its Greatneſs, and too much weaken the force of the impreſſion it was to make upon Men, he adds, *ver.* 6; "Theſe ſayings are faithful and "true,—and things which muſt ſhortly be done: *And ver.* 7; Behold, I come "quickly: *And* ver. 10; Seal not the ſayings of the prophecy of this Book; "for the Time is at hand: *And, in the words of the Text*; Behold, I come quick- "ly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his Work "ſhall be." The natural conſequence of which ſpeedy expectation of Judg-

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ment, is to infer that *Good Men* ought perpetually to be exhorted to perſevere ſteddily in their pious courſe, and to watch conſtantly, *leſt at any Time* (as our Saviour eſſewhere expreſſes it) " their heart be overcharged with ſurfeiting and " drunkenneſs, and that day come upon them unawares: For as a Thief ſhall " it come on all them that dwell on the whole Earth. *Therefore* he that is " righteous, let him *take great care that he* be righteous ſtill; and he that is holy, " let him be holy ſtill. " And on the contrary *Wicked Men* ought for the ſame reaſon earneſtly to be warned, that, if they repent not very ſpeedily, the Time will ſoon come when it ſhall be too late for them to have any Alteration made in their ſtate: " He that is unjuſt, let him be unjuſt ſtill; and he that is filthy let him be filthy ſtill. SERM. LXIII.

In the words thus explained, there are clearly contained the following particulars:

1*ſt*; A general Doctrine, that God will reward every Man with exact Juſtice according to his Deſerts: " *To give every Man according as his Work ſhall be.*

2*dly*; A particular Inforcement of this general Doctrine, from the conſideration of the *Speedineſs* of its being put in execution: *Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me.*

3*dly*; An Inference drawn from the foregoing conſideration; that ſeeing how *ſhort* the Time is, *good* Men have great reaſon to watch carefully, leſt at any time they fall away, and be ſurprized with Judgment: *He that is righteous, let him be righteous ſtill; and he that is holy, let him be holy ſtill.*

4*thly*; A Warning to the *Wicked*, drawn from the ſame conſideration; that, if they repent not very ſpeedily, the Time will quickly come, when God will give them over as incorrigible, and leave them to the ſad Effects of their own Perverſeneſs: *He that is unjuſt, let him be unjuſt ſtill; and He that is filthy, let him be filthy ſtill.*

I. *Firſt*; Here is the general Doctrine laid down, that God will reward every Man with exact Juſtice according to his Deſerts. *To give every man according as his Work ſhall be.* The Foundation of all Government, is the Diſtribution of Rewards and Puniſhments; and the Greatneſs and Wiſdom of a Supreme Governour conſiſts always in the exactneſs of that Diſtribution. God therefore, whoſe Kingdom ruleth abſolutely over all, who has the Power of all Things immediately in his own Hands, who governs the Univerſe uncontroulably by the Counſel of his own Will, and whoſe Greatneſs and Wiſdom are infinitely ſuperiour to the imperfect Excellencies of all finite Beings whatſoever; muſt conſequently be as much more exact, than any mortal Sovereign, in the diſtribution of Rewards and Puniſhments, as his Wiſdom is more impoſſible to be deceived, his Power more incapable of being reſiſted, and his Juſtice more impoſſible to be perverted. By the Light of *Nature itſelf* therefore, this Doctrine was known with great Certainty, that God would reward every man according to his Deſerts; it being evidently contradictory to the very Notion of the Being of God, and of his governing the World, that his ſupreme Kingdom ſhould be eſtabliſhed upon any other Meaſures, than thoſe of everlaſting Righteouſneſs and unalterable Equity. The Conſequence of this was, that ſuch as looked no farther than the preſent State, and thought man to be made only for an Inhabitant of the Lower World, expected every Man's Proſperity in *this Life*, ſhould have been proportionable to the degree of his Virtue. Which when they found not to be true in the Event, they concluded, that ſince God could not poſſibly be other than juſt, and yet in the Diſpenſations of Providence there appeared no Juſtice, therefore there could not really be any God at all. And had it been certain that theſe Inequalities of Providence were *final*, the Argument would indeed have been ſtrong and unanſwerable againſt the Being of God. But the Wiſer and Better Men among them, ſaw further; and judged, that the things which *at preſent* appeared to Us ſo unequal, might eaſily, by the Conduct of a ſuperiour Wiſdom, be made equal *hereafter*; For that even here among *Men*, the Juſtice of a Wiſe and Good Governour does not conſiſt in rewarding or puniſhing his Subjects immediately every mo-

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ment, but in doing it exactly and exemplary at such Periods of Time, at which it may have the greatest and most extensive Influence for the Benefit of his whole Dominions. And many *more* and *greater* reasons there may be for such delay in the Administration of *God's* Government; who, having all *future* Time in his Power as well as the *present*, is sure not to be disappointed of doing that at a *fitter* time, which otherwise it might be expected he should do *Now*. Many *more*, I say, and *greater* Reasons than there can be in any *Humane* Government, which if it does not administer Justice in the present Moment, it can never be certain it shall hereafter be able to do it at all. To the many *natural* Proofs therefore of the Immortality of the Soul, the Best and Wisest Men among the Heathens added this *moral* Argument also; that since God could not but be Just and Good, and yet Justice and Goodness did not sufficiently appear in the present Dispensations of Providence, therefore there would certainly be a future State, wherein should finally be rendred to every Man according as his deserts should be. And This Conclusion was extremely reasonable: For from Justice not being administred at present, one of these two things must of necessity be inferred; either that there will be a future State, without which Justice can never be done at all; or else that there is indeed no Government of the World, and consequently no God. Which being so; it is, of the two, infinitely more reasonable, in the judgment even of the bare light of *Nature itself*, to conclude from hence that there will be a future State, than to conclude that there is no God: Because, of the Being of God, there are numberless other natural and collateral Proofs, with which *this* side of the Argument is in conjunction and agreement; but there is no Argument in Nature, to lead us on the *other* side with Any Probability, to imagine that there will be no future State. Upon these grounds therefore, the Best and Wisest Men even in the Heathen World, did believe in general, a Judgment to come. And they who had not Capacity, to prove this Truth to themselves by Arguments of strict Reasoning; yet were convinced in their Minds by that natural Conscience of Right, which God had implanted in them, that God who governed all things, would sooner or later, in this World or in another, reward every Man according to his Works. This is the Voice of *Nature*, and the Dictate of *Reason*: And in all the *Revelations* that God has ever been pleased to make of himself to Mankind, his principal design has always been to confirm this most important Truth, this Foundation of all Religion and Virtue, with clearer and stronger Evidence; and to vindicate it from the Obscurity, wherein vicious and profane, or ignorant and superstitious Men, had endeavoured to involve it. The very giving of a Law, does in the Nature of the thing itself, imply a desire in the Law-giver that his Commandments should be observed: And the adding a Sanction of Rewards and Punishments, is only an express and explicit Declaration in particular, of what was before tacitly implied in general in the nature of the thing; that a Wise and Good Law-giver would take Care, that the Happiness of all his Subjects should be proportionable to their Obedience to the Laws of his Kingdom. In the *antientest* Times under the *Old Testament*, while God had as yet been pleased to give but very obscure Notices of himself by Revelation, yet Good Men had a firm implicit Belief and Reliance upon God, for the Equity of his Distributions. *Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?* said *Abraham* in the case of *Sodom*, Gen. xviii. 23; *That be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do Right?* In which matter though the Patriarch possibly was mistaken as to the *particular*, in judging that God was obliged in Justice to deliver private righteous persons from a publick *temporal* Destruction; yet the Notion *in the general*, concerning God's finally distinguishing Men according to their Deserts, was so right and of so much importance, that God thought fit to encourage it by complying with his Expectation even *without any Necessity*, and rescuing *Lot* by a miraculous and unexampled Deliverance. In the Book of *Job*, one of the antientest of all the *Jewish* Writings, we find the same Notion no less clearly expreft, ch. xxxiv. 10; *Far be it from God, that he should do Wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit Iniquity. For the Work of a Man*

a Man ſhall he render unto him, and cauſe every Man to find according to his Ways. After the giving of the *Law*, wherein almoſt all the Promiſes and Threatnings were temporal, and which conſequently could not be made out to be exact, unleſs they were underſtood as typically repreſenting a more perfectly equitable diſtribution hereafter; yet Holy Men, without being able to apprehend particularly in what manner it would be accompliſhed, depended upon it as the certain and unalterable Nature and Will of God, that by ſome means or other every man ſhould appear finally to be exactly recompenſed according as his Work ſhould be. *Unto thee, O Lord, belongeth Mercy*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, Pſ. lxii 12; *for thou rendereſt to every man according to his Work.* And the wiſe man, *Prov.* xxiv. 12; *Doth not he that pondereth the Heart, conſider it? and he that keepeth thy Soul, doth not He know it? and ſhall not he render to every man according to his Works?* and again, *Eccleſ.* xii. 14; *God ſhall bring every Work into Judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* By the *Prophets*, God himſelf in following times ſtill more and more expreſsly declared this Doctrine; *Jer.* xvii. 10; *I the Lord ſearch the Heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his Ways, and according to the Fruit of his Doings:* Which very ſame Words nearly, are again repeated, ch. xxxii. 19. In the *New Teſtament*, this great Truth is revealed *yet more particularly*, with more clearneſs, and with more diſtinct Circumſtances; and every where inſiſted upon as the principal Argument and Foundation of the whole Goſpel. Thus our *Saviour* himſelf concludes his Exhortation to the Practice of one of the moſt difficult Duties of Religion, St. *Matt.* xvi. 27: *For the Son of Man ſhall come in the glory of his Father, with his Angels, and then ſhall he reward every man according to his Works.* With this the *Apoſtles* always cloſe their Arguments to perſwade men to Obedience. St. *Paul*, in his Epiſtle to the *Romans*, ch. ii. 6; *God*, ſaith he, *will render to every man according to his deeds; To them who by patient continuance in well-doing ſeek for glory and honour and immortality; eternal life: But unto them that are contentious and do not obey the Truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs, indignation and wrath.* And This, to the *Jew* firſt, and alſo to the *Gentile*; To the *Gentiles*, according to their behaviour under the *Light of Nature*; To the *Jews*, according to their behaviour under the *Law of Moſes*; To the *Chriſtians*, according to their behaviour under the *Goſpel of Chriſt*. In his *firſt* Epiſtle to the *Cor.* iii, 8; " Every man ſhall receive his own reward, " according to his own labour: *In his* ſecond *to the* Cor. v. 10; that every one " may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, " whether it be good or bad: *In his Epiſtle to the* Gal. ch. vi. 7; Whatſoever " a man ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap, St *Peter*, *in his* firſt *Epiſtle ch.* i. 17; " *God*, without reſpect of perſons, judgeth according to every man's work." Our Saviour himſelf again, *Rev.* ii. 23; *I am he which ſearcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give unto every one of you according to your Works:* And ch. xx. ver. 12; *The dead were judged out of thoſe things that were written in the Books, according to their Works.*

And this dealing with men according to their Works, ſignifies in Scripture not only that great and *general* Diſtinction, of rewarding the good, and puniſhing the wicked; but it extends alſo to an exactneſs of *particulars*, in the degrees and proportions of thoſe reſpective ſtates. For though, in the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, there may ſeem to be ſomething that might favour the contrary opinion, when our Saviour repreſents himſelf giving to them that came in late, as well as to them that had born the burden and heat of the day, to each man equally a penny; yet in reality the Meaning of that Parable, is only to declare, that Sinners of the *Gentiles*, upon their true Converſion, ſhould become equally capable of the Benefits of the Goſpel, and of being admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven, as the *Jews* who had been all along the people of God. But, that in the Participation of that Happineſs, into which they had all equally a Right to enter, they ſhould all enjoy an *equal* portion; This the Parable does not affirm. And in other places, the Scripture, as well as the Reaſon of things, does on the contrary expreſsly mention great Variety

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riety of *degrees*: Telling us of ſome that *ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the Firmament*, and others *as the Stars for ever and ever*; and among theſe, of ſome that ſhall differ from others, *as one Star differeth from another Star in glory*: That one man ſhall receive a *prophet's reward*; and another, the *reward of a righteous man*; and a third inferiour to Both of theſe, yet *ſhall in no wiſe loſe his reward*: That one ſhall *receive Authority over ten Cities*, and another be made Ruler over *five*: That *every man ſhall receive his* own *reward*, i. e. his own particular proportion, *according to his* own *labour*; *reaping ſparingly* or *bountifully*, according as he has *ſparingly or bountifully ſown*: That He whoſe *Work abides* the *trial* of the *Fire* of God's Judgment, *ſhall receive a* great *reward*; and another, who *ſhall ſuffer loſs* by his *Work* being *burnt*, yet *ſhall himſelf*, for the Sincerity of his miſtaken Intention, *be ſaved* notwithſtanding, though *ſo as by Fire*: with difficulty, ſo as a man eſcapes out of a houſe which is on Fire. On the other ſide, in the diſtribution of *Puniſhments*, the Scripture expreſsly declares, that *in the day of Judgment*, there are ſome that ſhall hear a more *intolerable* Sentence, than that which paſſes on *the Land* even of *Sodom and Gomorrha*; And our Saviour threatens concerning the hypocritical Phariſees, that they ſhall receive (περισσότερον κρῖμα) *greater* damnation; And in general, of thoſe that knew *their Maſter's Will* and *did it not*, that they *ſhall be beaten with* many *ſtripes*; when thoſe who knew not *their Maſter's Will*, and *did things worthy of ſtripes*, ſhall *be beaten with* few *ſtripes*: They ſhall be puniſhed, or beaten with *ſtripes*, becauſe they committed things *worthy of ſtripes*, and therefore not capable of being wholly excuſed; yet with *few* ſtripes, becauſe their fault was extenuated with ſome degrees of *ignorance*. And this Method of proceeding, our Saviour not only aſſures us will be *in fact* the Method wherein God will proceed in judging the World; but moreover declares it to be *of Neceſſity* agreeable to the Nature and Attributes of the righteous Judge of the whole Earth; appealing herein to mens natural Senſe of Right and Equity, in matters of Juſtice and Judgment among themſelves. For ſo he adds in the very next words; *For unto whomſoever much is given, of him ſhall be much required*; *and to whom men have committed much of him they will ask the more.* In the manner of *Puniſhment*, this Judging of men *according to their Works*, is to be underſtood ſtrictly and literally, according to the *exact Deſert* or *Merit* of their Works. For *Puniſhment* being God's *ſtrange* Work, (as the Scripture expreſſes it;) which he inflicts, not with any delight, but merely becauſe it is fit and neceſſary; it is therefore infinitely certain, that no man ſhall be puniſhed otherwiſe, than according to the exact *Deſert* or *Demerit* of his Actions: But in the Matter of *Reward*, the Caſe is different; For here, God may do what he pleaſes with his own, and beſtow his Grace and Favour, his Bounty and Free Gifts, in what manner he himſelf pleaſes. *Merit*, (which thoſe of the Church of *Rome* vainly affect to talk of,) we poſſibly can have none. For our *good works*, as we call them, are at the beſt ſo imperfect, as to need Pardon rather than deſerve a Reward; and if they were never ſo perfect, yet they were ſtill nothing but doing what was our Duty to do, and we ſhould even then be but unprofitable Servants. *Merit* therefore, it is plain, we cannot poſſibly have any; And yet ſuch is the Goodneſs of God, that by his gracious Promiſe and Free Gift in Chriſt, he is pleaſed to give us as certain a Title and as undoubted a Claim to the Happineſs of Heaven upon our ſincere Obedience, as if we had really deſerved it of Right. And this his Free Gift he is moreover pleaſed to diſtribute in ſuch a manner, that though it cannot juſtly be ſaid to be beſtowed on us *for* our Works, yet it will be exactly *in proportion to* them; and to every man ſhall be given his reward, though not indeed *upon account of any Merit* in his Works, yet *according as* his Works ſhall be. It muſt be confeſſed, it is merely to the Goodneſs and Beneficence of God, to his gracious Will and good Pleaſure, to his *Decree* and Appointment in Chriſt, that we owe our being capable of any Happineſs at all: Yet this can be no ground of Scruple or Perplexity, no Cauſe of Difficulty or Uncertainty, in mens judging of their own Eſtate; ſince in this voluntary Decree and Appointment of God, he has clearly declared it to be his Will and Pleaſure, that

Dan. xii. 2. 1 Cor. xv. 41. Mat. x. 41. Luk. xix. 16. 1 Cor. iii. 8. 2 Cor. ix. 6. 1 Cor. iii. 15. Mat. x. 15. Mar. xii. 40. Luke xii. 47.

every

every man's Part in this free and undeſerved Giſt, ſhall be as exactly apportioned to his Work, as if it had been a Reward naturally and properly due, to the Merit of the Work itſelf. *Wicked men* have juſt reaſon to fear the Strictneſs and Severity of the Judgment of God, ſince they know their Puniſhment ſhall be exactly proportionable to the Greatneſs and Demerit of their Crimes. *Good men* have no leſs reaſon to rejoice in expectation of God's righteous Judgment, ſince, though they are very ſenſible they have no *Merit*, yet the Promiſe of God, that their Sincerity ſhall be accepted, is as good a Security to them, as any proper Merit of their own, if they really had it, would be. Simplicity and Integrity, Sincerity and Uprightneſs in the Practice of Virtue, and in Obedience to the clear Commands of God, according to our imperfect Ability; without regard to matter of difficult Speculation, and uncertain Diſpute; only taking care, not to lay Streſs upon Ceremonies, and upon Doctrines and Opinions of Men, inſtead of the Commandments of Chriſt; Sincerity, I ſay, is the *meaſure* by which our Actions ſhall be judged; and the *ground of proportion*, though not the *meritorious cauſe*, of the Reward of good Men. And this Proportion is ſo certain, that the Scripture teaches us to depend upon it with the ſame infallible Aſſurance, ſince God's *gracious and free promiſe* of it; as if it had been of ſtrict Right due to us originally, from the *Juſtice* and *Righteouſneſs* of God. *God is not* unrighteous, ſaith the Apoſtle, (*Heb.* vi. 10;) *to forget your Work and Labour of Love, which ye have ſhowed towards his Name:* And St. *Paul* exhorts us to be *therefore ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, foraſmuch as* we *know that* our *labour* ſhall not be *in vain in the Lord*; (1 Cor. xv. 58.) For the preſent, things may be in confuſion a little while and the righteous may be Oppreſſed for a few moments; but they have ſufficient reaſon to wait with patience, and comfort themſelves with the expectation of God's righteous judgment. *If thou ſeeſt the oppreſſion of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and juſtice in a province, marvel not at the matter*, ſays the wiſe man, Eccleſ. v. 8; *for he that is higher than the higheſt, regardeth, and there be higher than they.*

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And This may ſuffice for Explication of the general Doctrine contained in the Words, that God will reward every man with exact Juſtice according to his Deſerts; *To give every man according as his Work ſhall be.*

The *Second* thing obſervable in them, was the *particular* Inforcement of this *general* Doctrine, from the conſideration of the *Speedineſs* of it's being put in Execution, *Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me.* But this muſt be referred to a farther Opportunity.

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GOD will reward all Men according to their Deserts.

REV. xxii. 11, 12.

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still: And behold, I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to give every man according as his Work shall be.

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IN the Words I have before observed these four Particulars;

1*st*; A general Doctrine, that God will reward every man with exact Justice according to his Deserts: *To give every man according as his Work shall be.*

2*dly*; A particular Inforcement of this general Doctrine, from the consideration of the *Speediness* of its being put in execution: *Behold, I come quickly, and my Reward is with me.*

3*dly*; An

3*dly*; An Inference drawn from the foregoing conſideration; that, ſeeing how ſhort the Time is, *good* men have great reaſon to watch carefully, leſt at any time they fall away, and be ſurprized with Judgment: *He that is righteous, let him be righteous ſtill*; *and he that is Holy, let him be Holy ſtill.*

4*thly*; A warning to the *Wicked*, drawn from the ſame Conſideration; that, if they repent not very ſpeedily, the Time will quickly come, when God will give them over as incorrigible, and leave them to the ſad effects of their own Perverſeneſs; *He that is unjuſt, let him be unjuſt ſtill*; *and he that is filthy, let him be filthy ſtill.*

The *firſt* of theſe I have already diſcourſed of, namely, the general Doctrine that God will reward every man with exact Juſtice according to his Deſerts: *To give every Man according as his Work ſhall be.* I proceed now in the

II. *Second* place, to the particular Inforcement of this general Doctrine, from the conſideration of this *Speedineſs* of its being put in Execution: *Behold I come* quickly, *and my reward is with me.* The great Reaſon why the Arguments of Religion have ſo little influence upon the generality of Men, is becauſe the Rewards and Puniſhments of another Life appear to them ſo remote and at ſuch a Diſtance, that like Objects viewed afar off, their diſtance diminiſhes from their real Magnitude; and like Deſigns laid for a long time to come, the Certainty of the Event ſeems to decreaſe in proportion to its remoteneſs from the preſent time. In matters of *temporal* concern, this judgment men make of diſtant Events is *true*; Becauſe the Time to come, not being at all in *our* Power; and the incidents upon which all future Events depend being wholly out of the reach of *our* imperfect fore-ſight; the Uncertainty therefore of the Event is, not only in *appearance*, but in *reality* proportionable to the diſtance of time, wherein there is room for Accidents to hinder its Accompliſhment; for Accidents, which no Human Wiſdom can foreſee, and Human Power could prevent if they *were* foreſeen. But in Matters wherein *God* has declared himſelf concerned, and which *he* has revealed it to be his Will and Pleaſure they *ſhall* come to paſs; the Caſe is wholly different. For *God* having all *future* Time no leſs abſolutely in his Power, than the preſent Moment; whatever *he* has appointed, is liable to no more Uncertainty upon account of diſtance of Time, than if it was already actually fulfilled. Here therefore Men ought by Reaſon and Judgment to correct the Errour of their Imagination; and by ſerious and frequent Meditation to repreſent thoſe things to themſelves as *Now* preſent, which Time will certainly *Hereafter* bring to be ſo. With regard to diſtance of *Place* in ſenſible Objects, we are perpetually correcting the Errours of our Senſes by the Reaſon of our Mind; and Objects which at a diſtance appear to the Eye much ſmaller than they really are, we by our Judgment always conſider as of their true Magnitude. So in things of whoſe Truth we are aſſured by Divine Revelation, ſince diſtance of *Time* can diminiſh nothing from their real Certainty; it is the proper Act of reaſonable Beings, it is our Underſtanding, it is our Intereſt and our Duty, to conſider them as they really are in their own Nature, to judge of their true Weight and real Importance to us; and not ſuffer ourſelves to be deceived by ſuch Errours of a careleſs Imagination, by ſuch falſe Images of things future and remote, as we know that Time and Nearneſs of Approach of the things themſelves will certainly remove. Yet becauſe, after all, in this imperfect State, wherein things preſent and ſenſible are perpetually withdrawing our Meditations from things ſpiritual and remote, it is very difficult for us to ſuffer the Arguments of Religion, the Rewards and Puniſhments of another Life, to have their true Weight and juſt Influence upon us; therefore it has pleaſed God, by concealing from every Man the period of his own Life, and by making it every day uncertain, but his Soul may the next moment be required of him; it has pleaſed God to cauſe Eternity, which can never be very far diſtant from us, to be looked upon always by reaſonable and conſiderate perſons, as being *very near, even at the Doors.* The whole Duration of this World, from its Creation to its final Period, from the Time of its ariſing out of an unformed Chaos 'till its ſinking

again

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again into a heap of Aſhes; is, with reſpect to *God*, but as one ſingle moment; And if we ourſelves were to live to its Conſummation, it would even to *Us* alſo, when paſt, ſeem but as a few days, as a Shadow that departeth, or as a Dream when one awaketh. Moſt juſtly therefore may God repreſent that to us as coming very ſpeedily, which we ourſelves, when ſurprized with it, after how long ſoever a reſpite, ſhall think comes very quickly upon us. Vain men may Now mock at their diſtant Fear, and ſay, *Where is the promiſe of his Coming? For ſince the Fathers fell aſleep, all things continue as they were, from the beginning of the Creation:* But as *a thouſand years are Now with God as one day*, ſo it will Then appear even to *Them* alſo, when Time ſhall bring thoſe things to be preſent, which they now deſpiſe as remote; and which the Certainty of the Event ought to make us *Now* look upon with the ſame Concern, as we are ſure we ſhall *then* do. But this is not the whole of our Caſe. For, beſides the Shortneſs of the Time itſelf, it is really to *Us* much ſhorter, in that to *every particular Perſon*, the *World* comes to an End at the Concluſion of his *own* Life; and to *Him*, that Moment which conſigns him to Judgment, by requiring his Soul of him, and putting an End to all further Space of Probation; is in all reſpects the very ſame thing, as if the day of his Death were itſelf the great and final Day of Judgment. However remote therefore, with regard to the Ages of the World, that great Conſummation of things may be; yet, ſince every man's proper Concern therein, or that which will determine *his* eternal Portion, is of neceſſity and inevitably very near, in all probability much nearer than he expects, and poſſibly not many moments diſtant from him; for this cauſe our Saviour very juſtly and with great Reaſon, as well as in great Mercy and Compaſſion to our Infirmities, always repreſents his Coming as being very near: *Behold I come* quickly, *and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his Work ſhall be.* The Phraſe, *my Reward is with me*, is taken from the Prophet *Iſaiah*, ch. xl. 10; *Behold, the Lord God will come with ſtrong hand, and his arm ſhall rule for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his Work before him:* and ch. lxii. 11; *Behold, the Lord has proclaimed unto the end of the World; ſay ye to the daughter of Sion; Behold, thy ſalvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his Work before him:* And it ſignifies, the *Speedineſs* of the Event; that whereas Now both the righteous and the wicked, wait as in a State of Probation, without either of them finding their proper recompence; at the Coming of our Lord, they ſhall each without delay, have their Portion immediately aſſigned to them; *Behold, he comes quickly, and his reward is with him*; His Diſtribution of Rewards, will be immediate upon his Coming; and his Coming (with reſpect to the Concern every ſingle perſon has therein,) will be very ſpeedy. Accordingly, in his Appearance to St. *Stephen*, Acts vii. 56; he repreſents himſelf not as *ſitting*, but as *ſtanding* on the right hand of God, in a poſture ready to *receive*, and as it were to *meet* his faithful Martyr: And in the Epiſtle to the Angel of the Church of *Laodicea*, Rev. iii. 20, he deſcribes himſelf under the figurative reſemblance of one *ſtanding at the door and knocking*, to ſignify that he who will receive him, muſt do it immediately and without delay. At the very *beginning* of the whole Prophecy, the Viſion is introduced with a declaration that *the Time is at hand*, ch. i. 3: and in the Epiſtle to the Angel of the Church of *Philadelphia*, ch. iii. 11, are repeated the ſame Words, which in the Text *conclude* as they *began* the whole Book of this Prophecy, *Behold, I come quickly.* In the xxiv*th* Chapter of St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel, after a large Prophetical Deſcription of the Signs preceding his coming to Judgment, our Saviour concludes his Diſcourſe with an earneſt Exhortation to his Diſciples, to *Watch* and to *be ready always*; *For in ſuch an hour*, ſays he, *as you think not, the Son of Man cometh: And if an evil Servant ſhall ſay in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming; and ſhall begin to ſmite his fellow-ſervants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The Lord of that ſervant ſhall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of; and ſhall cut him aſunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth.* And the Apoſtles accordingly

in

in all their Epiſtles, are in like manner perpetually putting the Churches in mind, that *the Day of the Lord is at Hand.* The Paſſages of this nature are ſo frequent, that many Expoſitors have from thence been apt to imagine, that the Apoſtles themſelves were poſſeſſed with an erroneous expectation, that the End of the World was to happen in That generation. And poſſibly if our Lord thought fit ſo to intermix his prophetical deſcription of the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and of his final Coming to Judgment, (the one being a Tpye of the other;) that it ſhould not be eaſy to diſtinguiſh which part of the Prophecy belonged peculiarly to each event: And if he ſo thought fit to warn every *particular* perſon of his being unexpectedly called to Judgment, that his Expreſſions ſhould not be eaſily diſtinguiſhable from ſuch as would ſignify the Conſummation of all things to be at hand; which in Effect does really come upon every man at the Time of his own Departure out of this World: poſſibly, I ſay, in all This there might be nothing unbecoming the All-wiſe Diſpenſations of the Divine Providence. Yet on the other hand, that the Apoſtles could not entertain ſuch an Opinion of the World's coming to an End in *Their* days, is much more probable; For, the *Jews*, before and in the Apoſtles times, had a very antient and general Tradition, that the World was to continue at leaſt ſix thouſand Years, whereof no leſs than two Thouſand were to be Days of the Meſſias; And St. *Peter* himſelf, in the paſſage before-mentioned, ſeems to refer to it, when, in order to ſhow that *the Lord is not ſlack concerning his Promiſe, as ſome men count Slackneſs*, he bids us *not be ignorant of this one thing*, (alluding, as ſome think, to the ſix Days creation,) *that one Day is with the Lord as a thouſand years, and a thouſand years as one day:* And St. *Paul* in ſeveral of his Epiſtles foretels expreſsly things that were to happen after a *long* period of time, concerning *perilous Times in the laſt days*, and great Corruptions of Manners, and a *Man of Sin* to be revealed after the Deſtruction of the *Roman* Empire: And our Saviour himſelf, even in the earlieſt Times of the Goſpel, *before* his own Sufferings, and *before* the Apoſtles could have entertained any prejudice about the World's coming quickly to an End, and in that very Prophecy from whence that prejudice itſelf is ſuppoſed to have ariſen, *Luk.* xxi. 24; ſpeaks expreſsly of *Jeruſalem*'s being to be trodden down by the *Gentiles* for a *long* ſeaſon, even *until the times of the Gentiles ſhould be fulfilled:* And in this Book of the *Revelation*, after a large Prophecy of great Variety of Events to happen in a Succeſſion of ſeveral Ages, our Saviour yet repeats it twice in the laſt Chapter; *Behold, I come quickly.* Conſidering all theſe things, I ſay; it is much more probable the Apoſtles could not be deceived, with an erroneous expectation of the End of the World being near in *their* days; but that by the expreſſions of the Suddenneſs of Chriſt's coming, they meant, as in ſome Places the Deſtruction of the *Jewiſh* Nation, and in others the Shortneſs of the Duration of this World with reſpect to Eternity, ſo in moſt places the Uncertainty of every particular man's Life, and the Certainty of Death tranſmitting them very ſpeedily to Judgment: *Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his Work ſhall be.*

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III. The *Third* Thing remarkable in the Words of the Text, is the Inference drawn from the fore-going conſideration; that, ſeeing how *ſhort* the Time is, *good* men have great reaſon to watch carefully, leſt at any time they fall away and be ſurprized with Judgment: *He that is righteous, let him be righteous ſtill, and he that is holy, let him be holy ſtill.* As God has declared in Scripture, that *when the Wicked man turneth away from the Wickedneſs that he has committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he ſhall ſave his Soul alive*; ſo he has likewiſe denounced, that if *the righteous turneth away from his righteouſneſs, and do according to all the abominations that the Wicked man doth*; *all his righteouſneſs that he has done, ſhall not be mentioned*; but *in his Sin that he has ſinned ſhall he die.* For though *the juſt* man, while he continues ſuch, has a certain aſſurance that he *ſhall live by* his *Faith*; yet *if he draws back*, ſays God, *My Soul ſhall have no Pleaſure in him.* The Shortneſs of the Time, during which there is room for theſe changes in mens behaviour; during which the final and unal-

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terable determination of mens State is deferred; as it is a preſſing Motive, to Sinners to repent immediately; ſo it is a ſtrong Argument to perſwade good men to perſevere ſtedfaſtly in the courſe they are in; to prevail with them which are *righteous, that they be righteous ſtill.* It is, not only in order to avoid the final and eternal Wrath of God; It is, not only in order to attain a great and inexpreſſible Reward; but it is *in itſelf* moreover a reaſonable Service, that men ſhould perſevere in well-doing; and it is a Warfare only for a very *ſhort Time.* What Pity is it, that he who has already conquered the Temptations of Sin, that has already eſtabliſhed in his Soul an Habit of Virtue, that has already *taſted the good Word of God and the Powers of the World to come*; ſhould after This ſuffer himſelf to be tempted to fall away, and, for a few Moments ſinful gratifications, forfeit all his glorious Hopes of Happineſs, and loſe his Crown when he was juſt ready to receive it! *Hold that faſt, that thou haſt*, ſays our Saviour, *Rev.* iii. 11; *that no man take thy Crown.* What Pity is it, that he who has born the burden and heat of the Day, ſhould in the very Evening loſe his recompence, by refuſing to finiſh his Work! that *he who is* now *righteous*, ſhould not *be righteous ſtill*; when *behold* his Lord *comes quickly, and his reward is with him! Could ye not watch with me* one *Hour?* ſaid our Saviour to his Diſciples ſleeping when their Maſter was about to be betrayed: Could ye not perſevere a *few years* in the Practice of Righteouſneſs, (may it be ſaid to Backſliders at the Day of Judgment,) when your Reward was to be infinite and eternal, and your Labour *could not* be long, *might* poſſibly be very ſhort, until your *Lord at his coming had found* you *well-doing?* Our Saviour's Exhortations upon this Argument, are extremely affectionate: *Let your loyns be girded about, and your Lights burning; and ye yourſelves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the Wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately: —Be* ye *therefore ready alſo; for the Son of man cometh at an hour that ye think not*; St. Luke xii. 35: and ch. xxi. 34; *Take heed to yourſelves, leſt at any time your hearts be overcharged with ſurfeiting and drunkenneſs, and cares of this life, and ſo That day come upon you unawares; For as a ſnare ſhall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole Earth: Watch ye therefore and Pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to eſcape all theſe things that ſhall come to paſs, and to ſtand before the Son of man.* The Apoſtles in like manner in their Epiſtles, are perpetually reminding us, with great Earneſtneſs, of this Argument: *You yourſelves know perfectly*, ſaith St. *Paul, that the day of the Lord ſo cometh, as a Thief in the Night*; 1 Theſſ. v. 2: Therefore *Take heed, brethren, leſt there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God: — For we are made partakers of Chriſt, if we hold the beginning of our confidence ſtedfaſt unto the End*; Heb. iii. 12, 14: and ch. xii. 15; *Looking diligently, leſt any man fail of the grace of God; leſt any root of bitterneſs ſpringing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.* Our Saviour himſelf again, in the Epiſtle to the Angel of the Church of *Philadelphia*, Rev. iii, 11. *Behold, I come quickly; hold that faſt, which thou haſt, that no man take thy Crown:* and to the Church of *Thyatira*, ch. ii. 25; *That which ye have already, hold faſt till I come; and he that overcometh, and keepeth my Works unto the end, to him will I give power over the Nations, and he ſhall rule them with a rod of iron.* I obſerve but one thing further upon this Head; and that is, that from the forecited Exhortations it appears, that *Perſeverance* is not, (as has by ſome been vainly imagined,) a neceſſary conſequence of being once a true and faithful Servant of God; but it is a Duty perpetually incumbent upon us; a Duty, the performance of which is the Effect of great Care and conſtant Watchfulneſs. And as it is a thing of infinite danger for him that is now wicked, if he repents not immediately; ſo there is alſo, even upon him that *has* worthily repented, a perpetual danger of relapſing and of loſing his reward, *if*, being *now righteous*, he does not apply a conſtant Care and Diligence, that he *be righteous ſtill.*

IV. *Fourthly*; The *Laſt* Thing remarkable in the Words of the Text, is the Warning given to all Wicked men, that if they repent not very ſpeedily, the

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Time will quickly come, when God will give them over as incorrigible, and leave them to the ſad effects of their own Perverſeneſs: *He that is unjuſt, let him be unjuſt ſtill; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy ſtill.* All the Mercies and all the Judgments of God, all the Promiſes and all the Threatnings in Scripture; in a word, the whole Deſign of the Goſpel, is to call Sinners to Repentance. If they will not be drawn by theſe Cords of a Man, by theſe Motives ſuited to the Nature of rational Creatures; God is not obliged to compel them by Force and to uſe Methods inconſiſtent with his Government of the Moral World. As *he hath no need of the ſinful man*, as the wiſe Son of *Sirach* well expreſſes it; ſo neither is he in any *want* of the righteous. *If thou be righteous, what giveſt thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wiſe may be profitable to himſelf? Is it any* Advantage *to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? Or is it gain to Him that thou makeſt thy way perfect?* Job xxxv. 7; and xxii. 2. 'Tis no Addition to *his* Happineſs, that we do Good to ourſelves and others; nor any diminution of *his* Greatneſs, if by our Wickedneſs we deſtroy ourſelves. God therefore, as a Wiſe and Juſt Governor, and as a Good and Merciful Father, does all that is fit and reaſonable, to prevail with us to become righteous in order to our own Happineſs. But if we will not be made Happy, unleſs he work a Miracle to alter our Wills; if we will not become righteous, unleſs he change our Nature, and compel us contrary to the Order and Method of his Creation and of his Government of reaſonable Creatures; both Reaſon and Scripture aſſure us, that he may very juſtly ſuffer us to go on to be Wicked and Miſerable. In the *Old Teſtament:* Of that wicked Generation before the Flood, which deſpiſed *Noah's* Preaching: *My Spirit*, ſays he, *ſhall not always ſtrive with Man.* Of the People that were diſobedient in the Wilderneſs; *My people would not hearken to my Voice, and Iſrael would none of me; ſo I gave them up unto their Hearts Luſt, and let them follow their own imaginations.* Of the *Jews* who fell away in the Times of the Prophets; "Why "ſhould ye be ſtricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more; *Iſ.* i. 5: Can "the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his ſpots? then may ye alſo do "good that are accuſtomed to do evil; *Jer.* xiii. 23: *and Ezek.* iii. 27; Thus "ſaith the Lord God, He that heareth, let him hear, and he that forbeareth, "let him forbear; for they are a rebellious Houſe." Of back-ſliders in future times prophetically deſcribed before-hand, *Dan.* xii. 10; *Many ſhall be purified and made white and tried, but the Wicked ſhall do wickedly:* and *Hoſ.* xiv. 9; *The Ways of the Lord are right, and the juſt ſhall walk in them; but the tranſgreſſors ſhall fall therein.* In the *New Teſtament*: Of thoſe whoſe long Obſtinacy and Incorrigibleneſs had rendred them unworthy of further inſtruction, our Saviour declares, that he "therefore ſpake unto them in Parables, that ſeeing "they *might not* ſee, and hearing they *might not* underſtand; *or, as St.* Mark *expreſſes it, that* ſeeing they might ſee and not perceive, and hearing they might "hear and not underſtand; leſt at any time they ſhould be converted, and their "Sins ſhould be forgiven them." And St. *Paul* concerning perverſe Perſons, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 38; *If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.* Of the fooliſh Virgins, who watched not, neither had trimmed their lamps, but went too late to buy Oyl when the Bridegroom came; it is obſerved that they found no more place of admittance, than if they had been ſlothful ſtill. Of the Diſciples themſelves, who could not watch with their Lord one Hour, though he had twice vouchſafed to awaken them himſelf; it is remarkable, that at the third time he gives them this ſevere reproof; *Sleep on now, and take your reſt.* Of the *Iſraelites*, who, after all the wonders they had ſeen in *Egypt*, fell back to idolatry with the golden Calf, it is ſaid, *Acts* vii. 42; that *God turned and gave them up to worſhip the hoſt of Heaven.* Of the idolatrous *Gentiles*, who did *not like to retain God in their knowledge*; that therefore *God* gave them up *to uncleanneſs* and *to a reprobate mind.* Of *Pharaoh*; that becauſe of his Wickedneſs and Obſtinacy, God at laſt even *hardened his heart* judicially; *Rom.* ix. 18. Of the unbelieving *Jews*; that *ſeeing they put the Word of God from them, and judged themſelves unworthy of everlaſting Life*, therefore the Apoſtles were to *leave* them, and *turn to the Gentiles*;

Gen. vi. 3. Pſ. lxxxi. 11, 12. Luke viii. 10. Matt. xiii. 13. Mark iv. 12. Matt. xxv. Matt. xxvi. 45. Rom. i. 24 28.

Acts

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Acts xiii. 46. Of the Corrupters of Christianity, prophesied of by St. *Paul*, who should arise in the Apostacy of the latter times; that such *evil men and seducers should wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived*; 2 Tim. iii. 13; and that, *because they received not the Love of the Truth that they might be saved, therefore God* should *send them strong delusion, that they should believe a Lie*; *That they all might be damned who believed not the Truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness*; 2 Thess. ii. 10. *Lastly*, of all obstinately wicked and incorrigible persons, in the Words of the Text, at the End of the whole Scripture; that if they will not be moved to repent, by the things contained in that Book, by all the Arguments and Motives of the Gospel; then *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy let him be filthy still.* I conclude with adding this One Observation only, that this *being given over to a reprobate mind*, cannot possibly be the case of any *well-meaning melancholy Person*, who may be apt to be disturbed with such fears; Because, That very Fear itself, that Tenderness of Conscience, is a Demonstration that he is by no means given up to Hardness of Heart: The proper Use of the Doctrine upon This Head, is chiefly to Wicked and *Careless* Persons, to the Profane and Unholy, to Mockers and Despisers of Religion; that they repent immediately and without delay, lest hereafter they come to be *hardned* beyond remedy, *through the Deceitfulness of Sin.*

SERMON

SERMON LXV.

Of the Deceitfulneſs of Sin.

HEB. iii. 13.

But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day, *leſt any of you be hardned through the Deceitfulneſs of Sin.*

THE Phraſes, *To-day*, and *while it is called To-day*, ſignify in Scripture the *preſent* time, the *preſent* opportunity wherein a Sinner is called upon to repent; it ſignifies his doing it without delay, without venturing upon any further provocation, without longer tempting God, and abuſing the greatneſs of the Divine Patience. SERM. LXV.

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Some have from theſe, and other the like expreſſions of Scripture, in this chapter; concluded that God has aſſigned to every particular perſon a certain fixed time or ſpace of Repentance; beyond which period if he delays, and continues in Sin, they conceive that his day of grace is paſt, and that there remains no further room for his Repentance to be accepted. This, in the event indeed, may ſeem in ſome ſenſe to be true, ſo often as God in judgment cuts off a Sinner in the midſt of his Wickedneſs, or ſuffers him to become obdurate beyond all hope of recovery. But otherwiſe, and antecedent to the execution of God's final judgments, there is no ground from theſe words or any others in Scripture, to ſuppoſe that God denies to *any* one, to whom he is pleaſed to continue Life, and Health, and the Offers of his Grace by the ordinary Preaching of the Goſpel; there is no ground to ſuppoſe, that he *denies to any* ſuch *perſon*, either the poſſibility of repenting, or the acceptance of it.

All that the Apoſtle here intends, is, to inform us, that when God affords men ſpace and means of Repentance; when he has given them ſufficient proof, of his care and concern for them; and has made clear and plain Revelations of his Will; and enforced his Commandments with promiſes of great rewards to Obedience, and threatnings of ſevere puniſhments to Diſobedience; the Apoſtle then declares, that it is a thing of infinite hazard and unſpeakable danger to continue to tempt God, and to abuſe his Patience by repeated Provocations. It is a thing of infinite danger; not only for fear, leſt his patience being at length wearied out, he ſhould cut them off in his wrath, and aſſign them their Portion with Unbelievers; but alſo leſt even without this immediate Execution of the final Sentence on *God's part*, the Habit of Sin on our *own part* ſhould grow and increaſe into a ſtate of Hardneſs and Inſenſibility; which is a reprobate mind, and a condition very little leſs than deſperate.

And the greatneſs of this danger the Apoſtle affectionately repreſents unto us in this chapter, by the Example of the *Iſraelites* in the wilderneſs; *ver.* 7: Wherefore as the Holy Ghoſt ſaith, cited out of Pſ. xcv; *To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts; as in the provocation, in the day of Temptation in the wilderneſs; When your Fathers tempted me, proved me, and ſaw my works forty years; Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and ſaid; they do always err in their Heart, and they have not known my ways; So I ſware in my wrath, They ſhall not enter into my reſt.* The *Iſraelites*, after that great deliverance which God had worked for them, by bringing them out of *Egypt* with a mighty hand, and with a ſtretched out arm; ſtill continued to provoke him in the wilderneſs *ten times*; till at laſt he reſolved to caſt off that generation utterly, as an incorrigible people; and *ſware unto them, that they ſhould not enter into his Reſt.* The Miracles which they ſaw, grew by their frequency familiar unto them; The impreſſions, which the viſible power of God made upon their minds, wore out inſenſibly by degrees; and the good reſolutions and vows of better Obedience, which the ſight of a new miracle and every ſtrange work produced at the preſent inſtant; quickly grew faint and were forgotten; And every tranſgreſſion and rebellion againſt God, which by the divine Mercy and forbearance did not end in their immediate deſtruction; inſtead of putting them upon a ſtricter Care and more diligent Obedience for the Future, gave them encouragement to venture with leſs fear to tranſgreſs upon a new temptation; till at laſt they arrived at That ſtate which the Scripture deſcribes by *hardneſs of heart*; and which provoked God to pronounce upon them the final and irreverſible ſentence, of excluding them for ever out of the promiſed Land, and ſwearing that they ſhould wander in the wilderneſs till they died. This example the Apoſtle applies to *Us*, in the words of the Text; *Take heed, brethren, leſt there be in any of* you *an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day, leſt any of* you *be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of Sin.*

God

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God has delivered *Us* by the Death of Chriſt, and by the Light of the Goſpel, from the power of *Satan* and from the ſlavery of *Sin*; in like manner as he delivered the *Children of Iſrael* out of the *Egyptian Bondage*, by bringing them over the Red Sea. He has directed *Us* in our paſſage through this ſinful and corrupt World, by a clear and expreſs Revelation of his Will, by the Precepts and the Example of his own Son; as he led and guided *them* through the wilderneſs, by the miniſtry of *Moſes*. He has afforded *us* numberleſs inſtances of his Power, in the miracles worked by our Saviour and his Apoſtles, and in the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghoſt; as he did to *them* in ſhowing wonders by *Moſes*, and in the Spirit of Prophecy. He has vouchſafed to encourage *us* with great and glorious Promiſes of an eternal and never-fading Inheritance in the heavenly *Canaan*, as he did *Them* with plentiful but earthly and temporal Poſſeſſions, in the promiſed Land. Finally, he long bears with *our* repeated Provocations, and frequently renews that gracious Invitation to repentance, which he firſt made to us by his Son; in like manner as his Patience and long-ſuffering, endured *Their* tempting him in the wilderneſs ten times. If therefore after all this, *we* ſtill take not heed to ourſelves, but continue to harden our hearts, as the *Jews* continued to provoke God in the wilderneſs; The Caſe is but too plainly parallel; and there is very juſt reaſon to fear, that *we* alſo ſhall fall after the ſame Example of unbelief; and that God will cut *us* off from our Inheritance in the Kingdom of Heaven, as he ſwore to *Them* in his wrath, that they ſhould not enter into his Kingdom on Earth. It is the ſame Argument, which the ſame Apoſtle St. *Paul* more largely inſiſts upon, in the x*th* Chapter of his firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*: "Bre- "thren, *ſaith he*, I would not that ye ſhould be ignorant, how that all our "Fathers were under the Cloud, and all paſſed through the Sea, and were "all baptized unto Moſes, in the Cloud and in the Sea; ver. 1. But with "many of them God was not well pleaſed; for they were overthrown in the "wilderneſs; ver. 5. *This he applies to* Us *Chriſtians*, ver. 6; Now theſe "things were *our* Examples, to the Intent *we* ſhould not luſt after evil things, "as they alſo luſted." And then he inſtances in particulars, ver. 7; *Neither be ye idolaters, as were ſome of* them, *as it is written, the people ſat down to eat and drink, and roſe up to play*; i. e. at the Dedication of the Golden Calf they rejoiced in their Idolatry with feaſting and dancing: *Neither let us commit fornication, as ſome of them committed, and fell in one day twenty three thouſand*; ver. 8: *Neither let us tempt Chriſt, as ſome of them alſo tempted, and were deſtroyed of ſerpents*; ver. 9. And he concludes with repeating the ſame Application again, ver. 11; *Now all theſe things happened unto* them *for enſamples, and they are written for* our *admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come; wherefore let him that thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall.* In like manner the Apoſtle St. *Jude*, ver. 5. of his Epiſtle; *I will therefore*, ſaith he, *put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord having ſaved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward deſtroyed them that believed not.* His meaning is, that Chriſtians being once ſaved from Death, by the forgiveneſs of their Sins at Baptiſm, or whenever they come to Repentance and to the full knowledge of the Truth, ought to take great heed, leſt returning again into a ſtate of Sin and Debauchery, they be deſtroyed after the Example of the rebellious *Iſraelites*, and be for ever excluded from the Inheritance of God's Children. It is exactly parallel to the Occaſion and to the Words of the Text; *Exhort one another Daily, while it is called To-day, leſt* (like the *Jews* in the Wilderneſs, whoſe Caſe the Apoſtle had been deſcribing in the former Part of the Chapter,) *any of* you *be hardened through the Deceitfulneſs of Sin.*

To *be hardened*, or to *harden a man's own heart*, ſignifies, to have laid aſide that natural fear and deteſtation of Sin, which uſually at firſt reſtrains men from venturing upon great Impieties. It ſignifies, to have loſt or laid aſleep that quick Senſe, that uneaſy Judgment of the Mind and Conſcience; which by continually repreſenting to us the baſeneſs and vileneſs, the danger and evil

conſequences

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conſequences of Sin, will not permit Men, (ſo long as they give any attention to it,) to become abandoned Sinners. It ſignifies mens being at length reconciled to Sin; their chuſing it with approbation and deliberate choice; their becoming obſtinate and incorrigible under all the Judgments, and all the Mercies of God. Into this deplorable eſtate, Men do not ordinarily fall, on a ſudden and at once; but uſually they arrive at it by degrees, being ſeduced into it inſenſibly by the *enticements*, and drawn on gradually by the *deceitfulneſs of Sin*. And thoſe perſons, for whom God has worked the *greateſt* deliverances; to whom he has afforded, the *largeſt* means of grace; whom he has favoured with the *cleareſt* Revelations of his Will; (which was the Caſe of the *Jews* of old, and is of Chriſtians at preſent;) have of all others the greateſt Reaſon to take heed leſt they fall into this deplorable eſtate: Not only becauſe it is in itſelf moſt inexcuſable, when arrived at; and moſt provoking to God; but alſo becauſe in ſuch perſons it very ſeldom leaves room for an eſcape or remedy; Hardneſs of Heart in a Chriſtian, having already overcome, and prevailed againſt all thoſe means of recovery, by which an Heathen or ignorant Perſon may, with the grace of God, eaſily be brought to the acknowledgment of the Truth. But now by *exhorting one another daily, while it is called To-day*; *before* any of us be *hardened through the deceitfulneſs of Sin*; it is eaſy to prevent falling into ſo dangerous a condition. Men are not *at firſt*, apt to become hardened Sinners; nor is it eaſy for them to deſpiſe the Dictates of Reaſon and Conſcience, and with a high hand to reject all the Motives of the Goſpel at once. Few Sinners begin with open contempt of God, and profane mocking and ſcoffing at Religion. Few men, in their firſt Inſtances of Unrighteouſneſs, venture upon acts of violent and great Oppreſſion. Few at their firſt departing from the Laws of Temperance, run immediately into all extravagancy and exceſs of riot. But from careleſneſs and want of ſerious conſideration, and from neglect of Religion, Men fall inſenſibly into the madneſs of Impiety and Profaneneſs. From covetous deſires, and too great a fondneſs and ſollicitude for the things of this Life, a commendable diligence grows up by little and little into ſettled worldly-mindedneſs; and That betrays Men into the Uſe of fraudulent and indirect Methods; and then the Ways of Injuſtice are numberleſs and without End. From too free and ready a Compliance with the Cuſtoms of a corrupt World; Men are by Degrees deſpoiled of the Guard of their Innocence; and when once the banks of Modeſty and good Reſolution are broken, the Habits of debauchery prevail over them, and bear them down irreſiſtibly like a torrent. Small Sins or lower degrees of Unrighteouſneſs, preſent themſelves firſt, and gain admittance into the Hearts of the Weak, under the fooliſh Colour of their being but ſmall ones: But when a Man has yielded to *one* Sin, becauſe it is but ſmall; he cannot reſiſt the next, becauſe it is not much greater; and ſo by the ſame Argument, and by the ſame fooliſh repeated Temptation, he is by Degrees betrayed into the Commiſſion of the moſt enormous Crimes: Which, if any Man at his firſt being tempted to tranſgreſs, had foretold that he ſhould in proceſs of Time be induced to commit, he would have anſwered, as *Hazael* did to the prophet that foretold his Cruelty, *Am I dog, that I ſhould do this thing?* But at laſt thoſe very greateſt of Crimes make no more dreadful an appearance to his defiled Conſcience, than at firſt the leaſt Sins did to his innocent and uncorrupted Judgment. And when a man has once been guilty of a great enormity, and finds, as he vainly thinks, no great miſchief comes of it, becauſe the Vengeance of God is not preſently executed upon him; he begins to imagine, that a Courſe of Sin is not really of ſo deadly and deſtructive a Nature, as the Goſpel repreſents it, and as he himſelf formerly believed it to be; but he begins to be reconciled to it; and thereupon he commits the ſecond crime with leſs reluctance than he did the firſt; And ſometimes for no other Reaſon, but becauſe he has done it before. Thus the Habit of Wickedneſs grows upon him; and beſides the proper and immediate Temptation to every *act* of Sin, the very *cuſtom* of having done it makes it difficult for him not to do it again: He becomes aſhamed to retreat; and has no other

other arguments, to oppoſe to the enticements of Sin, and to the importunities of wicked and debauched Company; than ſuch as he has already often ſuffered to be baffled and overcome. Thus his Return becomes in a manner as difficult and hopeleſs, as that the *Ethiopian ſhould ever change his skin, or the leopard his ſpots*. The Temptations which he could not reſiſt in the Days of his greateſt ſtrength and beſt advantages, are become much more powerful by being often complied with; and if ever he recovers himſelf from the Slavery of Sin, it muſt be by overcoming an Enemy much ſtronger, and he at the ſame Time much weaker himſelf. This is deſcribed by the prophet *Jeremy* in a moſt elegant ſimilitude, *ch.* xii. *ver.* 5; *If thou haſt run with footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canſt thou contend with horſes? and if in the land of peace wherein thou truſtedſt, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the ſwellings of Jordon?* The effect of this is, that the Conſcience at length becomes ſeared and inſenſible; and the heart entirely hardned; and the Sinner has no *Deſire* left of recovering his Liberty, any more than he has *Power* to do it: The laſt and higheſt Degree of this evil State is, when a man having wholly laid aſide the thoughts of reforming himſelf, makes it his buſineſs on the Contrary to corrupt *others*, and to tempt *them* likewiſe into Debauchery; when he makes a *mock* of Virtue, and *ſcoffs* at Religion; *and ſits himſelf down* (as the Pſalmiſt expreſſes it) *in the ſeat of the* Scornful.

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This is *being hardned through the deceitfulneſs of Sin*; This is that evil State, of which the Apoſtle directs us to take diligent heed, and to *exhort one another daily while it is called To-day*, leſt any of us be ſeduced into any Portion or Degree of it. And very great reaſon there is for ſo earneſt an exhortation; 1*ſt*, becauſe of the extreme danger of this *ſtate* of Hardneſs, when arrived at in any conſiderable Degree; and 2*dly*, becauſe of the deceitful and inſinuating Nature of Sin, in the ſeveral *degrees* of approach towards ſuch a ſtate.

1*ſt*; Becauſe of the extreme danger of this *ſtate* of Hardneſs, when arrived at in any conſiderable degree. This has been already ſpoken to in ſome meaſure, in the general explication of the words of the Text. All that I ſhall add here, is, that the Scripture uſes jointly to repreſent the greatneſs of this danger, both from the conſideration of the extreme difficulty in the Nature of the *thing itſelf*, that men ſhould recover themſelves out of ſuch a ſtate; and from the conſideration of the high provocation which ſuch men give unto *God*, to cut them off in his wrath from all further means and ſpace of Repentance. This *latter* conſideration, drawn from the danger of *provoking God*, is made uſe of by the Apoſtle here in the Text; the exhortation therein contained, being the immediate application of that ſevere example of God's anger againſt the *Iſraelites*, recorded in the verſe foregoing, *So I ſware in my wrath, that they ſhould not enter into my reſt*. The *former* conſideration drawn from the difficulty of an habitual Sinner's Recovery in the nature of the thing *itſelf*, is made uſe of in ſuch places of Scripture, where it is aſſerted that *it would have been much better for men never to have known the way of righteouſneſs at all, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them*; and where their Repentance is deſcribed to be in a manner as hopeleſs, as in the Compariſon to be joined even with natural Impoſſibilities. And *Both together* are uſed by St. *Paul* in this Epiſtle, *ch.* x. *ver.* 26; *If we Sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the Truth, there remains no more ſacrifice for Sin*: that is, God will not afford men any *new* Revelation which may be of greater efficacy than the preſent; and all the Arguments which the *preſent* affords, they have already rejected by ſinning wilfully and habitually againſt the Truth. There is the extreme *danger* of the ſtate of thoſe men who are hardened in Sin, having made the preſent Revelation uſeleſs, and it being impoſſible they ſhould have a new one.

2*dly*; The *other* ground of the Apoſtle's exhortation in the Text, is the *deceitful* and inſinuating nature of Sin, in the ſeveral *degrees* of approach towards this ſtate of Hardneſs. *Exhort one another daily*; *leſt any of you be hardened through the* deceitfulneſs of *Sin*. Did Sin appear to men in its proper colours;

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and in the days of temptation repreſent itſelf truly and in the ſame dreſs, wherein all men behold it in the days of affliction, in the time of ſickneſs, and at the approach of Death; Did Sin always appear to Men, what it does ſometimes; (what it does, whenever they conſider it with ſober thoughts and with impartial reaſon;) to be a thing abſolutely hateful to God; baſe and vile, in the nature of the thing itſelf; contrary to all the reaſon, and all the wiſdom in the world; contrary to the judgment of our own conſciences, and the agreeing opinion of all the wiſe and all the good Men, nay and almoſt of all the *wicked* Men alſo, that ever lived: It would be in a manner as impoſſible for Men deliberately to chuſe it, as to chuſe Deſtruction and Death itſelf. But Sin, by that deceitfulneſs which the Apoſtle ſpeaks of in the Text, hides its deformed appearances from the eyes of fooliſh Men; and ſets before them nothing but Pleaſures and Profits, Joy and Vanity, preſent Security, and very diſtant, very uncertain, very remote Fears. It abuſes their Underſtandings with falſe Propoſitions; it ſeduces their Wills with alluring Promiſes of Pleaſure and Advantage; it corrupts their Affections with vain appearances and deceitful repreſentations; it prevents Mens Reaſon by ſurprize and paſſion, and by giving them no time for ſober thoughts and ſerious conſideration. It perſwades Men that God cannot be ſo ſevere as to deny them ſo many of the pleaſures of life; or at leaſt that it cannot be very unſafe for them, to follow the example of the generality of a corrupt world: It perſwades them that the conſequences of Sin, are not altogether ſo terrible as the Scripture repreſents; or that however they ſhall ſome way or other eſcape them. Nay ſuch is the *deceitful* nature of Sin, that it ſeduces Men into the ways of Death, not only by various, but even by *oppoſite* and *contradictory* inſinuations. Sin, they ſometimes think, is very *eaſy* to be avoided, and therefore they may be as careleſs and negligent as they pleaſe; or it is *impoſſible* to be avoided, and then they think it is to no purpoſe to endeavour to eſcape it. God, they ſometimes conſider, is very *merciful* and *gracious*, and therefore there is no need of any ſtrictneſs in Religion; or he is a very *hard and ſevere* Judge, and then they fancy it is but loſt labour to attempt to pleaſe him. *Chriſt's yoke*, they read, *is* eaſy, *and his burthen* light; and therefore they conclude they may ſafely preſume to indulge themſelves in Sin; or his commandments are *very grievous*, and then they fancy it is intolerable to fleſh and blood to undertake to obey them. Repentance, they have heard, will be accepted at *any* time, and therefore they preſume they may ſafely defer it as long as they pleaſe; or their Sins are gone beyond the meaſure of the Goſpel-pardon, and then they deſpair that their Repentance ſhould be accepted at all. Theſe and numberleſs other looſe and weak imaginations, are the *deceitful* ways, by which Sin inſinuates itſelf into fooliſh men; and by which they by degrees become hardened in it. The very naming of which deceits is a ſufficient demonſtration of their weakneſs and abſurdity.

But to be ſtill more particular in order to practice. The numberleſs Deceits and falſe Notions, by which Sin grows and prevails upon men, may almoſt all be reduced to the three following.

1*ſt*, Some degree of Infidelity or Unbelief.

2*dly*, Pretences of natural Infirmity. And

3*dly*, Fruitleſs Deſigns of future Repentance.

Either 1*ſt*, Men do not firmly and in earneſt believe the great Truths of Religion, that Sin will be finally deſtructive to them. Or, if they heartily believe this, then

2*dly*, They deceive themſelves by imagining, that their own Sins are not Sins of that deadly nature; but Sins of weakneſs and pardonable infirmity, Sins ſmall in their own nature, or to be reckoned ſuch upon account of the greatneſs of the Temptation, or elſe ſingle Sins, and ſuch as they hope may be made amends for by other virtues. Or, if they cannot ſatisfy themſelves with this, then

3*dly*, They deceive themſelves with a fruitleſs deſign of Repenting at ſome uncertain time hereafter; which vain reſolution is as certainly never executed,

as

as it is at preſent founded upon a falſe bottom of not repenting immediately.

1. *Firſt*; The firſt great Deceit, by which Sin prevails upon Men, is by keeping up in them ſome degrees of Infidelity or Unbelief. By Infidelity here, I would not be underſtood to mean Infidelity of open Atheiſts and profeſſed Unbelievers; but *ſuch* Unbelief, as is to be found in Men that pretend to Religion, and who may *ſeem* perhaps to be religious, not only to *others*, but, by a ſecret deceitfulneſs, even to *themſelves* alſo. As it is in itſelf of great and ſecret influence, and of very large extent; ſo it is That which (I ſay) the Apoſtle *particularly* aims at, very plainly, in the Text; For thus he expreſsly introduces it, in the words immediately *foregoing*; ver. 12; *Take heed, brethren, leſt there be in any of you an evil heart of* Unbelief, *in departing from the living God; But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day, leſt any of you be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of Sin*; of *That Sin* of Unbelief. And *afterwards*, in the 18*th* and 19*th* Verſes, ſpeaking *again* of the *Iſraelites* in the wilderneſs, (whoſe example of being hardened through the deceitfulneſs of Sin, he in the Text exhorts us to avoid,) he expreſsly attributes their Sin to *Unbelief*; For, having put the queſtion, ver. 11; *To whom did God ſwear that they ſhould not enter into his reſt, but to them that* believed not? He concludes, *ver.* 19; *So we ſee that they could not enter in, becauſe of* Unbelief. Again, *ch.* iv. *ver.* 6 and 11; *Seeing therefore it remaineth that ſome muſt enter into his reſt, and they to whom it was firſt preached entered not in becauſe of* Unbelief; *Let* Us *labour therefore to enter into that reſt, leſt any man fall after the ſame example of* Unbelief. And St. *Jude* in the paſſage before-cited, *ver.* 5, of his Epiſtle; *I will therefore*, ſaith he, *put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord having ſaved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards deſtroyed them that* believed not. In all theſe places, *Unbelief* is charged upon the *Iſraelties* in the wilderneſs, as the cauſe of their being hardened and rebelling againſt God. Now it is evident theſe men could not poſſibly disbelieve, either the *Being*, or the *Power*, or the *Providence* of God; becauſe they ſaw continually with their own Eyes, many miraculous Inſtances of his Preſence among them. It is plain therefore, their Unbelief conſiſted only, in not firmly believing God's *Promiſes* and *Threatnings*, ſo as to be influenced and led thereby to an univerſal obedience: This was *that deceitfulneſs* of Sin, which hardened *Them*; And the caſe is the very ſame *Now*, with moſt wicked men, who profeſs themſelves Chriſtians, and perhaps really think themſelves to be ſo. They are not Infidels or Unbelievers in the groſſeſt Senſe, becauſe they in ſome meaſure really believe their Religion *in general*, but they disbelieve *in particular* the heinous and deadly nature of Sin, and the juſt Severity of God's threatnings againſt it: Even in the ſame manner, as our firſt parent *Adam*, could not poſſibly but believe in God and fear him *in the general*; and yet weakly ſuffered himſelf to be beguiled *in the particular*, ſo as to imagine that though he *did* eat the forbidden Fruit, yet he ſhould not certainly die. Men *will* venture upon a courſe of Sin; and they *will not* believe that it will eternally deſtroy them. They *will* fancy they ſhall eſcape, though they know not upon what grounds; and their Unbelief is wholly contrary to all Principles of Reaſon. Such Unbelief as this, is very conſiſtent with a pretence of Religion, not only to *others*, but even to *themſelves* alſo. For *many wicked* men abhor Infidelity; and really think themſelves guilty of nothing leſs, than of *Unbelief*: And yet, if they would carefully obſerve and conſider the Caſe, they would find themſelves exactly in the ſame State with the *Jews* in the Wilderneſs, who for their *Diſobedience* are in Scripture ranked among *Unbelievers*.

The only Way to prevent this Deceit effectually, is to conſider frequently, and examine ourſelves diligently, and *to exhort one another daily while it is called To-day*. Let the Sinner conſider ſeriouſly with himſelf; if he were ſure God would immediately puniſh him in *This* World, for his Profaneneſs and Irreligion and Diſregard to the Almighty; would not This put him upon more ſober Thoughts? Undoubtedly it would. Yet if he pretends to be a Chriſtian, and to believe the Goſpel; (and with *ſuch Perſons only*

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only I am now arguing;) he cannot but be ſenſible, that a ſeverer Puniſhment will certainly overtake him. If his Shame were immediately to be publiſhed in the Face of the World, would he be guilty of the Vileneſs he Now ſecretly Commits? Without queſtion he would not. And yet he cannot but know, that the time *will* come, when it ſhall be openly publiſhed before Men and Angels, before all the Inhabitants of Heaven and Earth. If his Fraud and Injuſtice were by Human Authority to be publiſhed immediately, without any poſſible hope of eſcape, or of evading the power of the Laws; would not This prevail with him to forbear the commiſſion of it? Unqueſtionably it would: Yet at the ſame time he cannot but acknowledge, that the Conſequence of the Folly he now greedily commits, will in the End be Miſery and Death eternal. It is very evident, nothing remains in this caſe, but to conſider ſeriouſly the true importance of things; to make uſe of our Reaſon, and to ſhew our ſelves men: Not to ſuffer ourſelves to be impoſed upon by vain and empty Deluſions; but by immediate and effectual Repentance and real Amendment of Life, to make ourſelves Objects of *his* Mercy from whoſe Juſtice otherwiſe there is no eſcaping. *Let us exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; leſt any of us be hardned through the deceitfulneſs of Sin.*

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Of the Deceitfulneſs of Sin.

HEB. iii. 13.

But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day, leſt any of you be hardned through the Deceitfulneſs of Sin.

MY Deſign at This time from theſe Words, is to endeavour to expoſe the Weakneſs of that dangerous Error, by which Men ſuffer themſelves to be perſwaded, that tho' they *do* continue in the Practice of ſome Things directly contrary to the Law of God, yet theſe Tranſgreſſions of theirs are but Sins of *Weakneſs* and natural *Infirmity*; unavoidable effects of human Frailty; and Failings that cannot but meet with Pity and Compaſſion, with an obvious and eaſy Pardon. *The good that they would, they do not; but the evil which they wou'd not, that they do.* Now ſuch is the Wickedneſs and Folly of Mankind, that there is indeed hardly any

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Sin of ſo deep a Die, hardly any Impiety ſo enormous, but either Cuſtom and Habit in the Offender himſelf, or the Frequency and Multitude of Examples in Others, will make *ſome men* look upon it as a very pardonable Infirmity. Beſides thoſe who are thus abſolutely *hardned in Sin*, there are others that have ſome Degrees of Conſcience and Sincerity left, who yet ſuffer themſelves to be impoſed upon and drawn into the Commiſſion of many great Sins, by a falſe Perſwaſion, that what they do, will be excuſed under the Notion of human Frailty and natural Infirmity.

The moſt dangerous Errors of this kind, are in particular ſuch as follow.

Firſt; Sometimes men flatter themſelves that their *Sins are ſmall*, and of a leſs heinous Nature than thoſe of which they find ſome others accuſed; and that therefore they are to be allowed for, upon the Stock of natural and unavoidable Infirmity. Their Lives perhaps are not openly profane and ſcandalous; they are not reproach'd by the common cenſure of the World; nor guilty of ſuch Crimes, as fall uſually under the Cognizance of human Laws. They thank God they *are not as other men are, Extortioners, Unjuſt, Adulterers*; as the proud Phariſee in the Goſpel is deſcribed to have behaved himſelf; St. *Luke* xviii. 11: And becauſe they are not the *worſt* of men, therefore they conclude they may reckon themſelves in the Number of the *beſt*. They do not perhaps profanely mock and ſcoff at Religion, nor preſumptuouſly blaſpheme the Name of God; but they are careleſs and negligent in all moral Duties; void of Devotion towards God, and of all true Concern for promoting his Kingdom of Virtue and Righteouſneſs among Men. They will not perhaps oppreſs their neighbours, by open violences; nor be willing to bear the Infamy and Reproach of manifeſt Injuſtice. But they will be ſtrict and hardy beyond meaſure, in exacting the utmoſt they have any Right to demand; unmerciful to thoſe whom Law or Cuſtom, whom the Accidents or Misfortunes of the World have put into their Power; and greatly uncharitable towards them that have need of their Aſſiſtance or Relief. They will not perhaps *murder* their Brother; but they will requite him with very ill offices, and bear continual grudges and hatred towards him. They will not perhaps be intemperate in inſtances of general Diſreputation, or to degrees of great Enormity, and unavoidable Scandal: But where a general corruption of manners; the licentiouſneſs of a debauched Age; or the looſe Notions of vain and careleſs men, have made a Vice cuſtomary; there they will look upon ſuch a Vice, as but a ſmall Failing; as an Allowance which ought to be made in courſe, to their Age, their Employment, or their Company. Thus *Young* perſons are too apt to imagine, that the Sins and Impurities of Youth, ſhall hardly be mentioned in Judgment againſt them; and *old* Perſons, that the Covetouſneſs, Uneaſineſs, and Peeviſhneſs of Age, ſhall upon That account be excuſed as unavoidable Infirmities; and men of *much buſineſs* and commerce in the World, are apt to flatter themſelves, that ſome kinds of Deceit and fraudulent Dealings, will be lookt upon as very ſmall Faults, and eaſily pardonable upon the Neceſſity of their Affairs.

Secondly; At other times men perſwade themſelves that their Sins will be excuſed as Infirmities only, upon account of the *greatneſs of the Temptation* that overcomes them. Their Paſſion is ſo tranſporting, that they *cannot forbear* profaning the Name of God; or their Cuſtom of doing it, is grown to ſuch a Habit, that they are hardly ſenſible whether they do it or no. Their Anger is ſo ungovernable, that they cannot forbear reviling or injuring their Brother, upon the leaſt Provocation. Their Appetites are ſo violent, that to reſtrain them from forbidden inſtances, and keep them within the bounds of Reaſon and Religion, is like *cutting off a right hand or plucking out a right Eye*. The Company and Acquaintance they are engaged in, make ſome Vices appear ſo faſhionable that they are aſhamed to forſake them; or their buſineſs and employment in the World, makes other Vices ſo neceſſary, that they think it is almoſt impoſſible to proſper, or to ſtand upon the level with other men, if they be more conſcientious than They, and will not venture upon the ſame indirect practices.

Thirdly; Others think they ſhall be accepted becauſe of their *good reſolutions*; and that their Vices are of no worſe kind than pardonable Infirmities, becauſe they diſapprov and condemn them themſelves. They do not commit them with full choice, and with a perfect Complacency; but are overcome as it were, and conſent with

with an unwilling Willingneſs: *The Good that they would, they do not: But the Evil which they would not, That They do.* Their Judgment is on the Side of Virtue and Goodneſs, while their Actions are vicious; and they wiſh they were better and more religious men than they are. This ſelf-condemnation they take for a certain Mark of the Sincerity of their Heart; And it is an Error which has ſpread dangerouſly by a great Miſinterpretation of the viith Chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Romans*; where the Deſcription the Apoſtle gives of the Struggles of Conſcience which an habitual Sinner feels, has frequently been alledged as a Sign or Mark of the moſt perfect Chriſtian.

Fourthly; Some men think, that becauſe they *are not* guilty in *all* or in *many* inſtances of Vice, therefore they may ſafely eſteem themſelves good Chriſtians. They indulge themſelves perhaps but in *one ſingle beloved inſtance* of unrighteouſneſs; and this, they hope, may be made amends for by other Virtues. The Scripture itſelf tells them, *There is no man righteous, no not one*, and *that in many things we offend all.* They can recollect that ſome of the greateſt Men, whoſe Hiſtory is recorded in Holy Writ, have fallen in ſingle inſtances into great Crimes; and, much more, *Themſelves* (they think) may be allowed to have their Infirmities. They preſume they can apply to themſelves many promiſes, where aſſurance of eternal Life is given to particular Virtues. Their *Faith* they are ſure is unſhaken, though their *Obedience* is very defective; and they remember our Saviour's words; *that whoſoever believeth on him, ſhall not periſh, but have everlaſting life.* Or their *Repentance* is perpetual, though it never ends in *Amendment*; and they read that to *Repentance is always promiſed Remiſſion of Sins.* Or they depend on ſome *other ſingle* Duty: They pray to God; They fear him; They truſt in him; They love him, they think; though they are reſolved to be excuſed from keeping *ſome* of his Commandments; and very great promiſes they are ſure are annexed in Scripture, to *every one* of theſe Duties.

Theſe are ſome of the principal and moſt dangerous Deceits, by which Sin impoſes upon Men, and prevails in their practice, under Pretences of Weakneſs and natural *Infirmity*.

In order to ſhow the Danger and Falſeneſs of every one of which Deceits in particular, it may be proper to premiſe,

1*ſt*; Some *general* Marks, of what muſt *by no means* be allowed to be ranked under this Head of Sins of Infirmity.

2*dly*; An account of what is truly and properly ſuch. And from thence, in the

3*d* place, It will be eaſy to make appear in particular, that none of the forementioned Inſtances can with any juſt reaſon expect to be excuſed under that Name.

1. *Firſt*; As to the *general* Marks, of what muſt *by no means* be allowed to be ranked under this Head of Sins of Infirmity; we may ſafely affirm;

1*ſt*; That nothing can reaſonably be excuſed under that Name, which at the Time of its Commiſſion is *known* to be a Sin. To do an action, which at the ſame time that the perſon commits it, he knows or believes to be ſinful; is the proper Eſſence of preſumptuous Sin. And though there *are* indeed great differences, and various degrees, even of ſuch preſumptuous offences; from whence ariſe proportionable Extenuations of Guilt; yet every Action of This kind, is, in its Nature, evidently in ſome degree, a preſumptuous tranſgreſſion. It plainly argues a Contempt of God, a Neglect of his Authority, or a Diſbelief of his Promiſes and Threats. It is with a clear and determined Choice ſetting aſide all the Motives of the Goſpel, and directly preferring (at leaſt *at that particular time*) the pleaſures of Sin before the hopes of Heaven.

2*dly*; Nothing can juſtly be called a Sin of Infirmity, which is contrary to the expreſs Letter of any of the Commandments. The Reaſon is; becauſe no man *can* be ignorant, that ſuch an Action is a Sin; or if he be ignorant of it, it muſt be ſuch an ignorance, as is itſelf a Sin of preſumptuous Neglect; a wilful and affected ignorance; an obſtinate refuſing to receive Inſtruction; a ſhutting his Eyes againſt the Sun, and deliberately chooſing Darkneſs rather than Light. None of which Circumſtances affording Any manner of reaſonable Excuſe; it is evident (however

SERM. LXVI. (however otherwiſe a careleſs and debauched World may be apt to judge,) it is evident, I ſay, that No action ought to be eſteemed by us as a mere Frailty, which is contrary to the plain Letter of any of thoſe Commandments, which God has declared to be the conditions of Salvation; or which is clearly in the number of thoſe Works of the Fleſh, concerning which St. *Paul* bids us *beware that no man deceive us with vain words; for that they who do ſuch things, ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God.* Scoffers at Religion, and Profaners of the Name of God by oaths and imprecations; Practiſers of Injuſtice and Unrighteouſneſs, Fraud and Deceits, in their dealings one with another; the unholy and the impure, the drunkard and the fornicator, the riotous and debauched; would do well to conſider the expreſſneſs and earneſtneſs of this Declaration of the Apoſtle; and how little reaſon they have to hope, that their Faults ſhall be excuſed among the Frailties and Infirmities of human Nature.

3*dly*; Nothing will admit of a juſt and ſufficient Excuſe upon the account of Infirmity, which a man before-hand conſiders and deliberates with himſelf, whether it be a Sin or no. The reaſon is; becauſe Knowledge and Deliberation, imply Will and Choice; And, as One's chuſing what he fully *knows* to be unlawful, is the *higheſt* aggravation of preſumptuous Sin; ſo his conſenting to commit what upon Deliberation appears *very ſuſpicious and doubtful* to him whether it be lawful or no, is ſtill always ſome degree of wilful Sin; becauſe it is knowingly and deliberately venturing upon that, which he has reaſon to fear will not be pleaſing to God; For, *whatſoever is not of Faith, is Sin.* And though in all other things God is by no means ſevere, but pities and compaſſionates us and makes all poſſible allowances; conſidering that we are but Duſt, but frail and very fallible Creatures; yet in the matter of *Sincerity*, of an upright and honeſt Intention; in this *one* particular he makes no abatements. I am in the

II. *Second* place to give ſome account what *is* truly and properly a Sin of Infirmity, and may juſtly and reaſonably hope to be excuſed as ſuch. And

1*ſt*; A Sin of Infirmity is ſuch a Failing as proceeds from ſome *excuſable ignorance.* Not from ſuch ignorance as is totally and abſolutely unavoidable; for in That caſe, the action is not any Sin at all: Nor yet on the other ſide, muſt it proceed from wilful and groſly careleſs Ignorance, ſuch as That always is which betrays men into any great and ſcandalous Crime; But it is what proceeds from *ſuch* Ignorance, as might indeed poſſibly in every particular inſtance with great and conſtant Care have been avoided; and yet in general and upon the whole, through the Fallibility and Weakneſs of our Underſtandings, the Number of prejudices by which our Judgments are diſturbed, and the obſcurity and difficulty which often happens to be in things themſelves; hardly any man can be ſo diligent and cautious, as conſtantly to avoid it. In great Crimes, and plain Tranſgreſſions of the Commands of God, this Rule (as has been before ſaid) can have no place; becauſe no man can innocently or excuſably be ignorant, of the *great* and moſt important inſtances of his Duty. But the Plea of Ignorance muſt always be underſtood to take place *ſo far* only as the Ignorance was not owing to the ill Diſpoſition and direct Choice of the Will.

2*dly*; A Sin of Infirmity may alſo be ſuch a Failing, as is owing to *unavoidable Surprize:* By unavoidable Surprize, meaning not that which is ſtrictly and abſolutely unavoidable; but What, morally ſpeaking, conſidering the Multitude and Variety of the Circumſtances of human Life, the indiſpoſition of our Minds at certain Times, and the Suddenneſs of Objects ſtriking upon our Paſſions; cannot *always* be avoided, even by thoſe who *always* endeavour to pleaſe God. Of this kind are many ſmaller Irregularities of Paſſion, wanderings of Thoughts in Prayer, careleſs and inconſiderate Words, vain Thoughts; Deſires and Inclinations to certain ſinful Actions, ineffectual indeed and not proceeding to the Commiſſion of the Crimes themſelves, but yet entertained with too many degrees of Approbation.

Theſe, and ſuch like, are the Failings and Infirmities, incident more or leſs even to the beſt of men. Concerning which St. *John* affirms, that *if we ſay we have no Sin, we deceive ourſelves, and the truth is not in us;* 1 Joh. i. 8: and St. *James*, ch. iii. ver. 2; *In many things we offend all; If any man offend not in word, the ſame is a perfect man:* and *Job*, ch. ix. ver. 1; *How ſhould man be juſt with God? If I juſtify myſelf*

myſelf, my own mouth ſhall condemn me. And the Scripture gives us Inſtances accordingly, of *Noah*'s being ſurprized into an unhandſome exceſs; of *Moſes* himſelf ſpeaking unadviſedly with his lips; of *Eliſha*'s falling into an undecent diſcontent; of our *Saviour's Diſciples* weakly ſtriving for the preeminence; of St. *Paul*'s ſpeaking evil of the High Prieſt with too ſudden a tranſport; and the like. All which are *therefore* to be reckoned in the number of mere Failings and Infirmities; becauſe they were owing, not ſo much to deliberate choice, as to unthinking Surprize. SERM. LXVI.

Having thus briefly given ſome *general* Marks of what truly and properly *are* Sins of Infirmity, and what on the contrary may *by no means* be allowed to be excuſed as ſuch; it will from hence be eaſy in the

III. *Third* place, to make appear in *particular*, the Weakneſs and Falſity of thoſe Deceits, by which I have before ſhown that Sin uſually impoſes upon corrupt Men, and makes them without reaſon expect that their Crimes ſhould be excuſed under the Name of Infirmities. And

1ſt; Whereas Some flatter themſelves, that becauſe their Sins are (as they fancy) *ſmall*, and of a leſs heinous nature than many other mens; that therefore they may be eſteemed as no other than mere human Frailties; it is evident from what has been ſaid, that this is only true in ſuch caſes, where the thing proceeds from ſome conſiderable degree either of Ignorance or Surprize. For otherwiſe, though the matter of the Offence may in itſelf poſſibly ſeem to be but ſmall, yet if it be committed knowingly and wilfully, perverſely, and with deliberate Choice, it has the nature of a preſumptuous Sin. For it is not ſo much the outward action, as the diſpoſition of the Heart, that is looked upon by God; And he that with a high hand tranſgreſſes a plain and poſitive Precept, though the inſtance may ſeem perhaps in itſelf to be of but ſmall importance, yet he manifeſtly deſpiſes the Authority of the Law-giver, and is guilty of a profeſſed Contempt of God. For this Reaſon, in the hiſtory of the *Iſraelites* paſſing through the Wilderneſs, the Man that did but *gather Sticks* upon the Sabbath-day; becauſe he did it preſumptuouſly, and as it were in defiance of the Law newly given; was by a ſingular Severity commanded to be *put to Death*; Numb. xv. 35. Which ſhows abundantly, how little reaſon any one has to excuſe his Sin upon account of what He may call the Smallneſs of the *Matter*, when it is great and wilful and preſumptuous in the *Choice*. *He that deſpiſeth even ſmall things*, ſays the wiſe Son of *Sirach*, *ſhall fall by little and little*. The Anger which *Cain* cauſeleſly conceived againſt his more righteous Brother, and which he indulged and cheriſhed as unreaſonably, as he at firſt entertained it; ceaſed not till it ended in ſhedding his Brother's innocent Blood. The Liberty which *David* negligently allowed himſelf beyond the bounds of true Virtue, grew up into Adultery and Murder. And the connivance which (we read) *Solomon* gave to the idolatrous Worſhip of his Wives, concluded in withdrawing his own Heart from the Service of the One only true God.

2dly; Whereas others flatter themſelves that their Sins may be excuſed under the Notion of Infirmity, upon account of the *greatneſs of the Temptations* by which they are overcome, and which they think the Weakneſs of their Nature is not able to reſiſt; This alſo, from what has been already explained, appears to be too vain and groundleſs a Deceit. For, though the righteous Judge of the whole Earth, pities, and will make all equitable and reaſonable Allowances for the Difficulties of every particular perſon's circumſtances; yet in all plain tranſgreſſions, it cannot be eſteemed a ſufficient Apology, to alledge I have been ſtrongly tempted. Bearing up againſt Temptations, and prevailing over them, is the very Thing wherein the whole Life of Religion conſiſts; 'Tis the Trial which God puts upon us *in this World*, by which we are to make evidence of our Love and Obedience to him, and of our Fitneſs to be Members of his Kingdom. *He that overcometh, ſhall inherit all things*, ſaith our Saviour; *not he who being tempted, is overcome and falls away*. Were Temptations to great Sins, (even humanly or morally ſpeaking) irreſiſtable, this would indeed juſtly plead our excuſe, both before God and Man; *But God is faithful who will not ſuffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will with the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that we may be able to bear it.* And this being the caſe; it is a too great diſparagement of Religion, and altogether deſtructive of the Neceſſity of a Holy Life; to ſuppoſe that great Sins and Debaucheries ſhall therefore be excuſed as mere Frailties and Infirmities, becauſe men were ſtrongly tempted to

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commit them. No: *This is the race that God has ſet before us to run; This is the warfare which God has commanded us to fight, and to overcome in it*; And the Rewards and Threatnings of the Goſpel are all intended for this very end, to enable us to conquer and to prevail over ſuch Temptations. In the Days of Proſperity and Mirth, men are very apt indeed to put theſe Thoughts of future Rewards and Puniſhments far from them in their *imaginations*; And This makes Temptations ſtrong, that they cannot overcome them. But in *reality*, we are ſure Eternity can never be very far diſtant from us, though we cannot at any time know but it may be very near. The Motives of Religion ought therefore at all times to have ſo much Influence upon us, as to prevail over the Temptations of Sin; and it is not our Infirmity, but our Wickedneſs, if they do it not. Our Paſſions, and Appetites; our Employment, and our Company; our Youth, or our Age; the Examples of thoſe we converſe with, or the faſhionable and Cuſtomary Vices of our Country; Theſe and ſuch like, are the proper Temptations, which it is the *buſineſs* of Religion and the proper Trial of our Virtue to overcome; and if our Paſſions hurry us, or our Company ſeduce us, or the Cuſtoms and Faſhion of the World lead us careleſly and inconſiderately into the ways of Deſtruction; it is not our excuſe, but our condemnation, that *we have followed a Multitude to do evil*; that we have been prevailed upon more by the Shame of Men, than by the Fear of God; or that our Affection and Love to Sin has been ſo ſtrong, that our Reaſon and Religion has not been able to govern and ſubdue our Appetites.

3*dly*; Whereas Others imagine that they ſhall be accepted becauſe of their *good reſolutions*; and that their Vices are of no worſe kind than pardonable Infirmities, becauſe they *diſapprove and condemn them themſelves*: This likewiſe, it is evident, is a very great deceit; and indeed not an extenuation, but an aggravation of Sin. For what can be more abſurd, than that one ſhould think it to be an excuſe, that he ſinned *againſt* his Conſcience; or hope that God will therefore *not* condemn him, becauſe he is forced to condemn himſelf? When a Man approves in his mind the Law of God, and continually makes good reſolutions to obey it; and yet never puts theſe good reſolutions in practice, but is conſtantly overcome by the Temptations of Sin; it is true, ſuch a perſon has a Root and Foundation of Hope in him, which may at length produce a real and effectual Amendment: But if his Senſe of what is Right, and his Intentions of following it, never come to any Effect; it is not the Infirmity of his Nature, but the Weakneſs of his Virtue, and the Strength of his Love to Sin, that is the cauſe of his Deſtruction. The Scripture deſcribing ſuch perſons, calls them the *Servants of Sin*, St. Joh. viii. 34; and the *Servants of Corruption*, 2 Pet. ii. 19: and declares that *the End of that Service is death*, Rom. vi. 16; and that *no regenerate perſon can be in that State*; 1 Joh. iii. 9.

This viith chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Romans*, ſuppoſing St. *Paul* ſpeaks here of *himſelf*, and that in his own perſon he deſcribes the State of a good Chriſtian; would indeed countenance thoſe, who think good Reſolutions will make amends for their ill deeds. *But if working all manner of Sin*, ver. 8; *if being in a State of Death*, ver. 9 and 10; *if being ſold under Sin*, ver. 14; *if Sinning habitually againſt Conſcience*, ver. 15; *if being in captivity to the law of Sin*, ver. 23; *if being in that wretched condition which Chriſt came to deliver men from*, ver. 24, 25; *but which the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the Fleſh*, ch. viii. ver. 3: If all theſe things, I ſay, be marks, not of a good Chriſtian, but of a very bad man and habitual Sinner; then it is evident, that St. *Paul* does not here ſpeak of himſelf, nor of any regenerate Perſon; but of one that is yet in the contrary State: And conſequently no Apology can be drawn from any paſſages in this Chapter, for ſuch Perſons as ſometimes make indeed good Reſolutions, but nevertheleſs live on ſtill in Sin, and never put thoſe good Reſolutions in Practice.

4*thly* and *Laſtly*; Whereas Others vainly hope, that becauſe they avoid many ſorts of Sins, and are not willing to run into *every* Kind of Unrighteouſneſs, that therefore their beloved *ſingle Sins* ſhall be eſteemed as natural Infirmities only, and be compenſated by other Virtues; it is manifeſt from what has been already ſaid, that This alſo is a very dangerous and fatal Deluſion. For *every* wilful Sin proceeds from the ſame root of Bitterneſs, an unbelieving or diſobedient Heart: And he that habitually indulges any *one* beloved Luſt, though he is not indeed ſo *great* a Sinner in *degree*, as he who profligately gives himſelf up to work all *manner* of Wickedneſs, yet he is as truly

and

and really a preſumptuous Sinner; and conſequently, is in as *certain* a State of Death, though not liable to the ſame *Degree* of Puniſhment. No man can live wilfully in the practice of *any* known Sin, without bidding defiance to the Law and to the Authority of God: And therefore St. *James* declares, that *he who keepeth the whole Law, and offendeth in one Point, is guilty of all:* And *David* having tranſgreſſed in *one* great inſtance, repented all his Life, with the Severity of the repentance of an habitual Sinner: And St. *Paul* exhorts, that with more eſpecial care we avoid the Sin, whatever it be, that moſt *eaſily beſets us*; as being the principal part of that race, which the Providence of God has ſet before us, to be run with patience and with religious fear. SERM. LXVI.

SERMON

SERMON LXVII.

Of the Deceitfulneſs of Sin.

HEB. iii. 13.

But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day, leſt any of you be hardned through the deceitfulneſs of Sin.

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THE great Deceits by which Sin impoſes upon Men, are theſe Three: 1*ſt*; Some degrees of Infidelity or Unbelief: Men will not believe Sin to be of ſo deadly a nature, or the Judgments of God to be ſo ſevere, or the Execution of them ſo certain, as they are uſually repreſented.

2*dly*; Pretences of natural Frailty and Infirmity; which they hope will excuſe or at leaſt in great meaſure extenuate their Faults; And every man is apt to look upon his own particular Sins and Vices, whatever they are; to be of ſuch a nature, as may be capable of excuſe upon this account. Or,

3*dly*; A fruitleſs Deſign of repenting at ſome uncertain Time hereafter.

I ſhall

I ſhall at this time conſider only the laſt of theſe; which *as it is* of all others the moſt common and the moſt fatal Deceit, ſo it deſerves to be conſidered with the greateſt careſulneſs, and reproved with the moſt earneſt zeal. *To-day*, ſays the Spirit of God, *if ye will hear his voice*; embrace the Opportunity while it is preſent; *becauſe* we know not how long ſuch opportunities may be offered to us and how fatal may be the conſequence even of the ſhorteſt delay. SERM. LXVII.

All men who pretend to believe a God and a *future State*, and make Any Profeſſion of Religion at all, *muſt* found their hopes of Salvation on the *conditions* of that Religion, of which they make ſuch Profeſſion. Now the great conditions, which the *Goſpel* propoſes to us, by which we muſt be ſaved; are *Faith and Repentance*. Now to them who are born in a Chriſtian Country, and from the Beginning inſtructed in the great Truths of the Goſpel, the Difficulty does not ſo much lie in *believing* aright, as in *practiſing* ſuitably to ſo excellent a Belief. We careleſly ſuffer ourſelves to be corrupted in our *Manners*, and the Habits of Sin to prevail in our *Lives*; and then the difficulty lies in the practice of Repentance, which is Amendment and Reformation. The *Obligation* to Repentance, is ſo neceſſary and ſo evident, that no Sinner thinks he can be ſaved without Repenting at all: Yet to repent worthily, is ſo uneaſy a Duty; that men ſeek all poſſible ways to evade doing it effectually; and are willing to be impoſed upon in this matter by any of the deceitful repreſentations of Sin. Vicious and debauched minds pleaſe themſelves with conſidering, that Repentance, as it is the indiſpenſable condition, ſo it is alſo the *certain* means of obtaining Forgiveneſs. Upon this the Perſon flatters himſelf, that how wicked ſoever he is at preſent, yet, if he repent hereafter, he ſhall ſtill be ſecure. That he *ſhall* repent hereafter, he makes no queſtion; becauſe ſuch a reſolution is indiſpenſably neceſſary to maintain his preſent Peace, and ſecure his future Hopes: And when it may be too late, it is probable he *will* repent indeed. However in the mean time he goes on ſecurely in his Sin; and his Diſeaſe is therefore the more in danger to prove mortal, becauſe he neglects it upon a preſumption, that he can recover from it when he pleaſes.

Now before I enter upon the many *particular* Arguments which ſhow the extreme Danger and deſperate Unreaſonableneſs of mens delaying to reform their manners; it may not be improper to premiſe the two following Obſervations.

Firſt; That ſuch Perſons would do well to conſider *in general*, that if their reaſoning was true, and not ſome way or other an Impoſition upon themſelves, the whole Deſign of the Goſpel might be ſubverted, and there would be no indiſpenſable Neceſſity of a Virtuous Life. For if a man may ſafely continue in Sin at preſent; and there be no danger in ſo doing, becauſe he intends to repent hereafter; and that then it ſhall certainly be as well with him, as if he never ſinned; it will neceſſarily follow, that there is no abſolute and indiſpenſable Neceſſity of a virtuous Life at all; and ſo the great and principal deſign of the whole Goſpel, may be evaded at once. Now becauſe this evidently is the greateſt diſparagement to Religion in the World, and overthrows the main End and Intent of the Goſpel; men have great reaſon to ſuſpect, that they fatally deceive and *impoſe* upon themſelves, when they defer their Amendment; and that their danger muſt ſome way or other be greater than they are apt to apprehend. The Apoſtle bids us *take heed, that we be not* deceived; and aſſures us that *God will not be mocked*; but that *whatſoever a man ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap*. Now they who wilfully continue in the practice of known Sin, with deſign to enjoy the pleaſures of it at preſent, and yet at laſt to ſecure Heaven to themſelves by a late Repentance; are certainly, if there be any ſuch thing in the world, guilty of endeavouring to mock God; and of endeavouring to delude him, by obtaining Happineſs without obeying his Commandments, and ſecuring to themſelves the rewards of Holineſs without the trouble of practiſing it. If therefore it be certain that God will not be mocked; ſuch men have great reaſon to fear, that how plauſible ſoever their Hopes may be, yet God whom they contemn, will by ſome means or other diſappoint them; and either deny them the grace, or the Time of Repentance; or not *accept* their Profeſſions of it, when it is too late for them to evidence their Sincerity by the performance of their Duty.

Secondly, Another Obſervation I would here premiſe, is; that what ſhall be ſaid upon this ſubject, does not at all relate to the Frailties and Infirmities of ſuch perſons, as ſincerely endeavour in the general courſe of their lives to obey the will of God; but concerns only ſuch, as are wilfully and deliberately vicious and debauched.

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This being premiſed *in general*; I proceed now to lay before you briefly ſome of the principal Arguments in *particular*, which ſhow the extreme danger and deſperate folly of Mens continuing in Sin, and delaying the Reforming of their Lives. *But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day, leſt any of you be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of Sin.* And

I. *Firſt*; It is obvious that no Man is ſure of Life, for ſo much as the ſpace of one ſingle moment. The Experience of every day, affords us abundant proof, that even *without* God's interpoſing in the way of a miraculous judgment, a Sinner may eaſily be ſurprized with the arreſt of Death; and, in the midſt of his Security, have his Hopes cut off for ever; and find his condition determined, without poſſibility of alteration, to an endleſs Eternity. Every thing *within* us, and every thing *without* us; every thing that is *hurtful* and every thing that is *beneficial* to us; may prove the occaſion of our Fall. The Seeds of a mortal Diſeaſe, may already be formed in our Bodies; and Millions of external Accidents, are perpetually ready to deſtroy us. If the Guilt of wilful Sin be upon us, we are actually under the Sentence of God's Wrath; and if in that ſtate we be called to appear in judgment, that Sentence will become irreverſible by being immediately executed upon us. The Danger that every wilful Sinner, that every Debauchee is perpetually in upon this account, is greater than can be expreſſed; and if they were duly ſenſible of it, greater than could be ſupported: In the time of Sickneſs, and at the *apparent* approach of Death, it becomes wholly intolerable, and fills the ſouls of the moſt hardned Sinners, with inexpreſſible Amazement. The Danger is really the ſame, how little ſoever ſenſible they be of it; the Danger (I ſay) is *really* the ſame, to a great number of Sinners, in the midſt of their Health and Mirth; and *may*, for ought they can tell, be ſo equally to them *All*: Death being every day very near to ſome of *them* that leaſt expect it; and no ſingle Sinner can have any ſecurity that it is not ſo Now to Him; and if it be, he without remedy periſhes for ever. We all ſtand upon the brink of a Precipice, where the ground is every moment ſinking under our feet; and no Caution, no Prudence, no Foreſight of ours, can poſſibly prevent it. *For man alſo*, as *Solomon* expreſſeth it, *knoweth not his Time; But as the fiſhes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the ſnare, ſo are the ſons of men ſnared in an evil time, when it falleth ſuddenly upon them*; Eccles. ix. 12. Sinners vainly boaſt themſelves of To-morrow, and flatter themſelves with Hopes of becoming more religious after *many* years; But, alas, they know not what a *Day*, what an *Hour*, what a *Moment* may bring forth. The very next Night may put a Period to their Hopes for ever; and when they lie down to ſleep in a careleſs ſecurity, they may at their awakening find themſelves in a portion of eternal miſery. Our Saviour warns us of this, in the Parable of the Rich Man; who when he had ſaid to himſelf, *Soul, thou haſt much goods laid up for many years; take thine eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry*; God ſaid unto him, *Thou fool*, this night *ſhall thy ſoul be required of thee, and then* whoſe *ſhall thoſe things be, which thou haſt provided?* Luke xii. 20. Upon which, our Lord adds an earneſt exhortation to all his Diſciples, *ver.* 35; *Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourſelves like unto men that wait for their Lord.* And *ver.* 39; *This know, that if the good Man of the houſe had known what hour the Thief would come, he would have watched, and not have ſuffered his houſe to be broken through: Be ye therefore ready alſo; for the Son of Man cometh at an hour that ye think not.* And again, *ver.* 45; *If that ſervant ſay in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming; and ſhall begin to beat the men-ſervants and maidens, and to eat and drink and be drunken; The Lord of that ſervant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour that he is not aware; and will cut him aſunder, and will appoint him his portion with the Unbelievers.* The ſame caution he repeats by St. *John*, in his epiſtle to the church of *Sardis*, Rev. iii. 3; *If thou ſhalt not watch, I will come on thee as a Thief, and thou ſhalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.* And St. *Paul* in 1 Theſ. v. 2. very emphatically; *For yourſelves know perfectly that the day of the Lord ſo cometh, as a Thief in the Night; For when they ſhall ſay, Peace and Safety; then ſudden deſtruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they ſhall not eſcape: Therefore let us not ſleep*, ſaith he, *as do others; but let us watch and be ſober.*

II. *Secondly*; Another Argument I would urge upon this head, is as follows.

Virtue, or *Holineſs* of Life, is the abſolutely neceſſary and indiſpenſable condition, upon which alone the Goſpel affords Men any hopes of Salvation, and any title to the promiſes of God. *Except your righteouſneſs*, ſaith our Saviour, *exceed the righteouſneſs of*

of the Scribes and Phariſees, ye ſhall in no caſe enter into the kingdom of Heaven; Mat. v. 20. And he declares that *at the day of judgment he will bid to depart from him all the workers of iniquity*, whatever pleas they may otherwiſe make of their having been his Diſciples; *Mat.* vii. 21. And St. *Paul* expreſly aſſures us, that *without Holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord*; Heb. xii. 14. And having inſtanced in ſuch practices as are contrary to Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs, he tells his Converts with great earneſtneſs, and repeats it again and again, that *they who do ſuch things ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God*; Gal. v. 21. And indeed the *whole* Scripture *throughout*, conſtantly repreſents it as the great, the indiſpenſable end, and chief deſign of the Goſpel, to oblige us *to put off the old man, to mortify the fleſh with the affections and luſts, and to be renewed in the ſpirit of our minds; to purify ourſelves from all filthineſs both of fleſh and ſpirit, and to perfect holineſs in the fear of God.*

Now This is certainly a work of Time and Care, an employment that well deſerves to be the buſineſs of a whole *Life*; and which They who begin the ſooneſt, and make the feweſt delays, will find they have not too much time to finiſh. And if a virtuous *Life* be the only and indiſpenſable condition of the Goſpel, nothing can be more vain, than to expect that God will inſtead thereof accept a few empty reſolutions, and fruitleſs profeſſions of ineffective Sorrow, at the approach of Death. To go on at preſent in a courſe of Debauchery, or in the practice of any known Vice, upon ſuch an expectation; is wholly to take away the neceſſity of virtuous Living; and Obedience to God's Commands cannot be ſo indiſpenſable, as both Scripture and Reaſon repreſent it, if it matters not *how long* it be, before we ſet about it.

Such Imaginations cannot proceed but from very evil cauſes and principles, *from the gall of bitterneſs, and from the bond of iniquity*; from ſuch Principles, as are altogether inconſiſtent with Sincerity; inconſiſtent with Any Sincerity even of that very *deſign* of Repenting hereafter, upon which all the Hopes of delaying Sinners are founded. For how can a Man with any Sincerity *deſign* to *repent* of That Action, which yet at the preſent he *reſolves* to commit? How can he intend ſeriouſly to wiſh that undone hereafter, when it ſhall be impoſſible to undo it; which now, while it *is* in his power, he will by no means be perſwaded to forbear doing? What greater poſſible mockery can any Man be guilty of, both before God and Man? It is directly contradictory to the very nature and eſſence of Repentance, to deſign to repent hereafter, and not to do it Now. For what is Repentance, but a Change of Mind, a Sorrow for what is paſt, a deſire of undoing it as far as is poſſible, and an acting in a contrary manner for the time to come? Now how can a Man intend to change his mind? How can he reſolve, that for the time to come he will think *That* fooliſh and unfit to be choſen; which yet at preſent he *will* obſtinately chuſe? If he thinks a thing fit to be done Now; how can he intend hereafter to think it was unfit? And if he deſigns hereafter to think it was unfit, how is it poſſible for him now to think it fit and reaſonable? A Man may always indeed upon better information, reaſonably change his Mind; and it may be a great inſtance of Wiſdom, to diſapprove and repent hereafter, of what he ignorantly and fooliſhly chuſes Now: but to intend Now, at the very time that he does the Act, to diſapprove and repent of it hereafter; this is clearly as direct an Inconſiſtency, as that a perſon ſhould be of two contrary Opinions at one and the ſame time. Whoever repents worthily, would give all the World, if it were in his Power, that he had never forfeited the Favour of God: And therefore that any Man ſhould *ſincerely* intend ſuch a Repentance, at the ſame time that he deliberately chuſes, upon ſome trivial temptation, to offend and *provoke* the Almighty; is altogether impoſſible to be conceived. It is like a Traveller's going out of his way on purpoſe, that he may have the trouble of returning into it again; It is as abſurd, as if a Man ſhould chuſe to take *poiſon*, on purpoſe that he might run the hazard of recovering his Health by an Antidote; or that a Seafaring perſon ſhould deſire to have his Ship caſt away, on purpoſe that he might have a poſſibility of being ſaved upon a Plank; and that even this Plank itſelf he would defer as long as poſſible, before he would lay hold of it. The Folly in both caſes is equally great, and the choice, were there no Blindneſs and Deceit in the caſe, is equally impoſſible. It is very evident therefore, that in habitual debauched Sinners, all deſigns of future Repentance, are mere cheats and deluſions, and not any hearty intention of becoming truly virtuous and religious at all. But

III. *Thirdly*; This is not all. For, ſuppoſing there were no deceit in this matter; and that ſuch delays were conſiſtent (as they manifeſtly are not) with a

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real, ſincere and hearty intention of Repenting at ſome time or other; yet That intention in all probability will never be put in practice; becauſe there can be no reaſon for continuing in Sin at preſent, but what will perpetually grow ſtronger againſt forſaking it hereafter. The common and moſt *uſual* reaſon of delay, in thoſe who pretend to any deſign of reforming at all; is the difficulty of doing That at preſent in the midſt of Temptation, which they hope they ſhall hereafter be able to do more eaſily, when the Temptation is removed. But this is a very great and fatal miſtake. For whatever Difficulties they are at preſent ſenſible of; will either increaſe continually in proportion to the delay; or new and greater Difficulties will ariſe in their ſtead. Cuſtom itſelf becomes a Temptation, even upon its own account; and (beſides all *other* Temptations to Sin,) the very Habit of having frequently done any thing, makes it perpetually more and more difficult (even ſeparate from all other Temptations,) to break off the Practice. The Accidental Changes of Age and Company, and other Circumſtances of Life, may indeed *vary* Mens Temptations; but they ſeldom or never *remove* them: And the Mind that is ſo much under the Power and Dominion of Sin, that it cannot think of leaving it, ſo long as the particular Temptation remains; may, upon the ceaſing of That Temptation, alter perhaps the Inſtances of its Folly and Wickedneſs, but will not the more eaſily return into the ways of Virtue and true Wiſdom: Even as the Matter of a *bodily* Diſeaſe, by ſhifting from one part to another, may perhaps vary the Symptoms of its malignity and danger; but does not therefore make the Perſon at all the nearer to Health, unleſs it be expelled out of the whole Body. On the contrary: As the Diſeaſes of the Body grow ſo much the *more* dangerous and difficult to cure, by how much the longer the Remedy is neglected, and deferred to be applied; ſo, to recover the Mind out of a ſtate of Wickedneſs, is always ſo much the more difficult, by how much the longer the Amendment has been put off. For though perhaps the *particular* inſtance of the Temptation may be changed, yet the Power of Sin in *general* is unqueſtionably increaſed, and the Heart more and more enſlaved with unrighteous Practices, and further eſtranged continually from God and Goodneſs. By *continuance* in Sin, Men grow more and more *hardned* through the deceitfulneſs thereof; both by the juſt Judgment of God, and by the natural Conſequence of the Thing itſelf. Their Conſcience becomes ſtupified and inſenſible, their Judgment depraved and incapable, of diſtinguiſhing things rightly, their Underſtanding darkned and blinded, their Mind alienated from God and Virtue, their Will and Affections more and more biaſſed and enclined to Evil, the Aſſiſtance of the Grace of God, every day diminiſhed; and in every reſpect the longer Men delay, the more they incapacitate themſelves for that indiſpenſible work, which, if it be not perfected, they muſt periſh for ever. They too often bring themſelves at laſt into that ſad and deplorable condition, which the Apoſtle deſcribes by being dead *in Treſpaſſes and Sins*; that is, having ſo far loſt all ſenſe of Virtue and Religion, as that there is little more hope of ever recovering them, than there is of bringing even the dead to Life. Concerning Theſe it is that the Prophet elegantly complains, *Jer.* xiii. 23; *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? then may ye alſo that are accuſtomed to do evil, learn to do well.* And the Wiſe Man, *Eccl.* i. 15; *That which is crooked, cannot be made ſtraight; and that which is wanting, cannot be numbered.* If by any means ſuch perſons come at any time to be thoroughly awakened into a ſenſe of their Danger, and to ſee the abſolute neceſſity of changing their courſe of Life immediately; yet their reſolutions are weak and unſtable as water, and their hope apt to be wavering and without any certain foundation. They are ſure, that God, as well as their own Conſcience, is very juſtly angry; The number and heinouſneſs of their paſt Sins terrifies them beyond meaſure; the Difficulties before them, in the little time they have left, appear unſurmountable; and their ſecurity, is on a ſudden turned into a peeviſh and diſconſolate Deſpair. They were preſumptuous and negligent to conquer thoſe Difficulties, which at firſt hindered their entering into the paths of Virtue, like a ſmall rivulet that obſtructed their paſſage; and now the obſtacle is ſwelled into an overflowing ſtream, *like Jordan in the time of Harveſt.* This compariſon is very elegantly ſet forth by the prophet *Jeremy*, ch. xii. 5; *If thou haſt run with footmen and they have wearied thee, then how canſt*

thou

thou contend with Horſes? and if in the land of peace wherein thou truſtedſt, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the ſwellings of Jordan? SERM. LXVII.

It is here very neceſſary to take notice, as I obſerved at the Beginning, that what is ſpoken upon This Subject, is not at all applicable to the Frailties and Infirmities of ſuch as ſincerely deſire to obey God's Commandments; much leſs does it in any wiſe concern thoſe pious perſons, who are very apt to accuſe themſelves in *general*, without being conſcious of any *particular* Wickedneſs; and torment themſelves with the fear of evil and perhaps blaſphemous Thoughts, and the like, which they heartily deteſt and abhor. But all that has been now ſaid, belongs only to Thoſe, who live wilfully and preſumptuouſly in the known Breach of God's expreſs Commands. And to Sinners of *This* kind deferring to Amend, I may add,

IV. *Fourthly* and *Laſtly*; Beſides the before-mentioned *natural* ill conſequences of delaying Repentance, what *Security* have they, that if they *do* repent upon a Death-bed, *God* will then accept them? Is it fit that ſinful and diſobedient Creatures, obnoxious to the wrath of God, and every way unworthy of his Mercy ſhould deſpiſe all his gracious offers of forgiveneſs, and declare they will not be reconciled to him, till they have enjoyed the vile pleaſures of Sin and Debauchery, as long as they pleaſe? Is it not an Inſtance of his Goodneſs and Compaſſion, and the purchaſe of no leſs a price than the Blood of Chriſt; that the Benefit of Repentance is *at all* allowed them, after great, wilful, and preſumptuous Crimes? Shall Men, then, inſtead of thankfully accepting this ineſtimable mercy, trample upon it and deſpiſe it by continuing obſtinately in Sin; and heap up unto *themſelves wrath againſt the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God*? Would any *Earthly Governor* bear with thoſe who ſhould tell him, they would rebel againſt him as long as they pleaſed, and then intended to ſue to him for Pardon afterward? Excellent are the words of the Son of *Sirach* to this purpoſe, *Eccluſ.* v. 4; *Say not, I have ſinned, and what harm has happened unto me? for though the Lord is long-ſuffering, he will in no wiſe let thee go; Concerning propitiation, be not without fear, to add Sin unto Sin; And ſay not, his mercy is great, he will be pacified for the multitude of Sins; For mercy and wrath come from him, and his indignation reſteth upon Sinners; Make no tarrying to turn unto the Lord and put not off from day to day; for ſuddenly ſhall the wrath of the Lord come forth, and in thy ſecurity thou ſhalt be deſtroyed, and periſh in the Day of vengeance.*

It is not without *particular* reaſon ſo diſtinctly recorded in Scripture, how *David*, for the Act of two preſumptuous Sins, was driven out from his Kingdom, and afflicted with great and almoſt continual calamities the remaining part of his Life: And yet He was a perſon eminent for great and illuſtrious Virtues, and his Repentance for thoſe particular Sins was early and very exemplary. Where then ſhall thoſe appear, who live in the continued habitual practice of great and crying Sins, and think to expiate all the Wickedneſs of a whole Life, by the careleſs formalities of a late Repentance? *If judgment thus begins at the Houſe of* God, *and the* righteous *ſcarcely be ſaved; where ſhall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear*? There are indeed inſtances in Scripture of great Sinners, whoſe Converſion has been as remarkable as their Sins were great and many: But there is no Inſtance of any that ever wilfully and deſignedly (after their Knowledge of the Truth) delayed their Repentance, and yet perfected it and were accepted afterwards. On the contrary, the Scripture rather expreſſes an exceeding great danger, leſt *ſuch* perſons ſhould not be accepted at all. The Thief upon the Croſs indeed *was* accepted, becauſe it was the *firſt* Opportunity, though in the *laſt* part of his life, that he had of confeſſing his Faith in Chriſt: But from hence no argument or apology can be drawn for thoſe, who *wilfully deſpiſe* our Lord and his Holy Commandments, in the *whole courſe* of their Lives. The Labourers alſo called into the Vineyard at the eleventh hour, were *therefore* entertained, becauſe they had no Opportunity of coming in in the morning; But it would have been no excuſe to *Thoſe* who were called in the morning, to have ſaid at *night*, that they were ſorry for having been idle *all the day*. Concerning *ſuch* perſons the Scripture threatens, that *when once the the maſter of the houſe is riſen up, and has ſhut to the door, and they begin to ſtand without, and to knock at the door, ſaying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; he ſhall anſwer, I know you not whence you are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity*; St. Luke xiii. 25. And God, in the perſon of Wiſdom, forewarns them, *Prov.* i. 24; *Becauſe I have called, and*

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ye refuſed; I have ſtretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have ſet at nought all my counſel, and would none of my reproof; I alſo will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as deſolation, and your deſtruction cometh as a whirlwind; when diſtreſs and anguiſh cometh upon you: Then ſhall they call upon me, but I will not anſwer; they ſhall ſeek me early, but they ſhall not find me. And our Saviour repreſents their caſe under the parable of *five fooliſh* Virgins, who neglecting to trim their lamps till the noiſe of the bridegroom's coming, were excluded, as unprepared for the wedding. And ſeems to inſinuate in the manner of his weeping over *Jeruſalem* St. *Luke* xix. 42, that the time *may* come, when *the Things that belong to men's peace, ſhall be hid from their eyes:* Which it ever it be verified in *ſingle* perſons, it muſt needs be upon ſuch as we are now deſcribing. And St. *Paul* applies to them the evil ſtate of the *Jews* in the wilderneſs, who having often provoked God, and long refuſed to obey him and enter into the promiſed land; at laſt, when they *would* have entered, he ſuffered them not, *but ſware unto them in his wrath, that they ſhould not enter into his reſt*; Heb. iii. 11. And the Apoſtle compares *preſumptuous* Sinners *to Eſau*, Heb. xii. 16. *Leſt there be any fornicator or profane perſon as Eſau, who for one morſel of meat ſold his birth-right; For ye know how afterwards, when he would have inherited the bleſſing, he was rejected; for he found no place of Repentance, though he ſought it carefully with Tears.* The meaning of theſe ſevere Texts is not, that effectual Repentance and Amendment ſhall ever be rejected; No, God forbid. But have they therefore no meaning at all? Do they not at leaſt expreſs thus much? For *Eſau*'s Repentance, was not a Repentance to *Amendment:* But the meaning is, that men may by a Habit of Wickedneſs and Debauchery, bring themſelves they know not how ſoon into ſuch circumſtances, that it ſhall be morally impoſſible, that is, exceeding difficult to renew them again unto ſuch a Repentance as ſhall be accepted for true and effectual.

The Application of what has been ſaid, is evident. *Let us ſeek the Lord early, while he may be found; let us call upon him while he is near: before our feet ſtumble upon the dark mountains, and we be overtaken with the ſhadow of Death, when That Night cometh wherein no man can work. Let us watch continually; becauſe we know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the Son of man cometh.* I conclude with the words of the wiſe Author of the Book of *Eccleſiaſticus*, ch. xxi. ver. 2; *Flee from Sin as from the face of a Serpent; For the teeth thereof, are as the teeth of a Lion, ſlaying the Souls of men.* And *ch.* xviii. *ver.* 20; *Before judgment examine thy ſelf, and in the day of viſitation thou ſhalt find mercy; Humble thy ſelf before thou be ſick, and in the time of Sins ſhew Repentance; Let nothing hinder thee to pay thy vows in due time, and defer not till Death to be juſtified.*

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That true Chriſtians are free from all Habits of Sin.

1 JOH. iii. 9.

Whoſoever is born of God, doth not commit Sin; for his Seed remaineth in him; and he cannot ſin, becauſe he is born of God.

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THE Nature of God, is perfect *Goodneſs*, and complete and abſolute *Happineſs*. Theſe two divine Perfections, are mutually founded in each other; and are joined together by an eternal, neceſſary and inſeparable connexion. Every degree of *Goodneſs*, as it is an approach to the Nature and Likeneſs of God; ſo it is partaking in ſome proportion of that Bleſſed Diſpoſition, which in an infinitely Good Being is infinite *Felicity*: And every deviation from the Rules of everlaſting Righteouſneſs and Goodneſs, is a Departure from God, and a wilful forſaking of our own Happineſs. The Foundation therefore of Religion, is the Knowledge of God; The Practice of

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of it, is the Imitation of his Perfections. And the End and Deſign of it, is the bringing us to a participation of his Glory. This capacity of knowing God, and of imitating his divine Excellencies; is the principal thing that diſtinguiſhes *Men*, from the inferiour Orders of Creatures: And according to the ſeveral degrees we attain of this Knowledge; the greater are our Poſſibilities of raiſing ourſelves to a higher meaſure of Happineſs, and the ſtricter our Obligations to attend the Duties of a holier and more perfect Religion. The Goſpel of Chriſt, has furniſhed us with clearer and truer Notions of the Nature and Attributes of God; with juſter Apprehenſions of the Greatneſs of his Power, the Wiſdom of his Providence, the Severity of his Juſtice, the Tenderneſs of his Mercy, and his wonderful Love and Condeſcenſion towards Mankind; than the unaſſiſted Light of natural Reaſon alone could ever diſcover, or than could be made out by all the additional helps and improvements of Philoſophy; And proportionably greater are the Obligations it has laid upon us, to imitate the Holineſs of *his* Nature, who *is of Purer Eyes than to behold iniquity*; to be infinitely fearful of offending *his* juſtice, whoſe *wrath* is Now moſt expreſly *revealed from Heaven, againſt all Ungodlineſs and Unrighteouſneſs of Men:* and to be diligent in all things, to approve our ſelves worthy of that mercy and loving-kindneſs of God, which is made manifeſt in the Goſpel; *walking* worthy of God, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *who has called us unto his Kingdom and Glory*. This, as it is every where inſiſted upon in the *New Teſtament*; ſo in no part of it is it more ſtrongly inculcated, more frequently and more emphatically urged, than in this *firſt* Epiſtle of St. *John*. The whole Deſign whereof is to remind us, that as *God* himſelf *is Light*, that is, perfect and unmixt Holineſs; ſo no Man who *walketh in darkneſs*, who liveth in wickedneſs and impurity, can *have Fellowſhip with Him*: that there is no ſuch thing as *knowing God*, no ſuch thing as having any pretence to his Favour; any *other* way, than by *keeping his Commandments*: that whoever *ſaith, he abideth in Him*, muſt *himſelf alſo walk, even as He walked:* that ſince *the Father has beſtowed* ſuch *Love upon us, that we ſhould be called the Sons of God*; it behoves *every man that has this hope in him*, to verify that high Title, by *purifying himſelf even as he is pure:* That all *other* methods of appearing to be religious, beſides that One real and ſubſtantial Rule of *doing righteouſneſs* in imitation of God, are mere *Deceits*; That there is *One only* manifeſt and infallible mark, to diſtinguiſh between *the children of God, and the children of the Devil; whoſoever doth not Righteouſneſs, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his Brother:* Laſtly, that *Whoſoever is born of God, doth not commit Sin; for his ſeed remaineth in him, and he cannot Sin, becauſe he is born of God.*

In Diſcourſing upon which words, I ſhall firſt endeavour to explain diſtinctly the ſeveral Phraſes made uſe of in the Text: What is meant, by *being born of God*: In what Senſe it is ſaid, that whoſoever is ſo born of God, *doth not commit Sin*: What is to be underſtood by the Reaſon alledged, *For his Seed remaineth in him:* And how it is affirmed that ſuch a one *cannot ſin, becauſe he is born of God.*

Secondly; I ſhall conſider briefly the general Doctrine, intended to be laid down by the Apoſtle in the Words. And

I. *Firſt*; What we are to underſtand by *being born of God*; *Whoſoever is born of God.* Now this Phraſe, by an eaſy figure, *ſignifies* being of ſuch a Divine and Heavenly Diſpoſition, of ſuch a virtuous Frame and Temper of Mind, as denominates a Man a worthy and good Chriſtian, a true and ſincere member of Chriſt, a Subject of the Kingdom of God on earth; and qualifies him to be a Partaker of his Kingdom in Heaven. And the *reaſon* of the Expreſſion, is clear and obvious. For as in the ordinary courſe and derivation of things *Natural*, the *Offſpring* is always of the ſame Species with the *Stock* from whence it proceeds; and the *Effect* muſt in proportion be anſwerable, to the Nature and Operations of the *Cauſe* that produced it; as the *Stream* muſt always be of the ſame kind, and retain the ſame good or ill Qualities, with the *Fountain* from which it flows; and the *Branches* cannot be of another nature, than the Root from whence they derive their Original: So in things *Moral*, in things *Figurative*, in things *Spiritual* and of an *Abſtract* nature; there can *ſeldom* be any deſcription given of them, ſo lively and ſignificantly expreſſive of their true nature and properties, as by repreſenting

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ing them under the Similitude of the ordinary courſe of Cauſes and Effects, and according to the Proportions of things of a natural Derivation. The ingrafted Branches as well as the natural, receive their nouriſhment from the Root they are united to; and partake of its Life and Fruitfulneſs. Accordingly, Our ſpiritual communication with Chriſt our Head, and our Dependance upon him as ſuch; the neceſſity of our being transformed, into the likeneſs of his nature; and of our being in *our* meaſure and proportion, what he was in *his* complete Poſſeſſion of divine Perfections; this our Lord *himſelf* repreſents to us by comparing himſelf to a *Vine*; (St. *Joh.* xv. 1;) of which Himſelf is the Root, and his Diſciples the Branches. Nor could the largeſt and moſt particular deſcription in *Any* words, give us a clearer Notion *how* the Chriſtian Life conſiſts in the imitation and practice of thoſe excellent Virtues, which are in their proportion Tranſcripts of the *Divine* Perfections; than we are at once furniſhed with, by ſuch a Compariſon. *Children by Adoption*, are *preſumed*, to conform themſelves to the manners, to imitate the Cuſtoms, to obey the Rules, of the Family they are received into; and, as far as poſſible, to anſwer in every reſpect the relation of natural Children. The Scripture ſtiles thoſe the children of *Abraham*, not only who were derived from him by lineal deſcent according to the Fleſh; but Thoſe alſo even *much more*, more frequently and more emphatically; who, though Strangers by Birth, yet ſo imitated his Faith, and copied after his exemplary Obedience; as if they had had the advantage of his religious Education, and had been brought up in the Family and under the immediate Care of that great Father of the Faithful. SERM. LXVIII.

To be *Born of God* therefore, ſignifies, by the *like* figurative expreſſion, being of ſuch a *diſpoſition*, of ſuch a *temper*, of ſuch *acquired Qualifications* of Mind, by the habitual practice of Religion; as if we had been originally and by Nature conſtituted of a more excellent and divine Frame; that, in like manner as Angels, thoſe higher and more perfect Spirits, thoſe Servants of God that do his pleaſure, are conſtantly and without reluctance obeying his Will in Heaven; ſo We may with cheerfulneſs be perpetually performing, his Commandments on Earth. Which ready and delightful Obedience cannot be better deſcribed, than by repreſenting it under the Similitude of a natural and original Perfection, even as the immediate Effect and Product of the moſt Excellent and Perfect Cauſe. By *eſcaping the corruptions that are in the world through Luſt*; we are *made partakers*, ſaith St. *Peter*, *of the Divine Nature*; 2 *Pet.* i. 4: We are exalted beyond our proper and original capacities, to the likeneſs of God, and to a participation of his divine Excellencies. Our Saviour himſelf illuſtrates his deſcription of a truly good man, by *the like* compariſon, St. *John* iii. 6; *That which is born of the Fleſh, is Fleſh; but that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.* His Meaning is: by our *natural* Birth we are entitled only to the poſſible Acquirements of this frail and mortal Life; but by being *renewed in the Spirit of our Mind*, through the Power and Efficacy of true Religion, we are prepared for a happy Immortality; for ſuch an Immortality, as if even originally we had been created of a higher and more perfectly ſpiritual Nature; of *ſuch* a nature, as we ſhall be endued with at the *reſurrection*, when we ſhall be (as our Lord is pleaſed to expreſs himſelf) *equal unto the Angels.* The ſame Expreſſion St. *Paul* makes uſe of, *Gal.* iv. 29: *As Then he that was born after the Fleſh, perſecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even ſo it is now.* By One *born after the Fleſh*, he means a worldly and ſenſual perſon, one that has wholly given himſelf up to gratify his bodily Appetites, and purſue the ſinful enjoyments of the *preſent* Life, without making any improvement of his Mind by Virtuous Practice, in order to prepare himſelf for a better State *hereafter*. On the contrary, a religious and good man, who ſubdues the irregular Appetites of Senſe, and keeps them in Subjection to the Laws of Reaſon, and of a holy and ſpiritual Religion beyond what could be expected from the mere Dictates of Nature, ſuch a One the Apoſtle deſcribes by being *born after the Spirit*. The intention of *Both* theſe Phraſes is, to ſignify, that true Religion makes ſo great an improvement of our Nature, ſo great a change in the Life and Diſpoſition of a Man who has formerly been wicked; that it is not improperly expreſſed, comparatively ſpeaking, by his being as it were *Born* into a new State. Civility and Government, Learning and good Manners,

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transform the Nature of Man from Savage to Human; and true Religion exalts it ſtill higher, from Human even to Divine.

As therefore *Children by* Nature are apt to reſemble their Parents, and to *conform* themſelves to the Manners and Cuſtoms of the Family wherein they receive their Education; So they who *through grace*, they who being *born of the Spirit*, are *transformed by the renewing of their mind*, Rom. xii. 2; and, who, by Obedience and Imitation of God, are *changed* (as the Apoſtle expreſſes it) *into the ſame Image*, 2 Cor. iii. 18; are aptly called his *Sons* and his *Children*; having attained that excellent privilege by the improvements of Religion, which Angels are endued with by the prerogative of their Creation. Angels, upon account of the original Excellency of their created Nature, are frequently in Scripture ſtiled *the Sons of God*; and of good Chriſtians, upon account of their reconciliation and return to the favour of God, it is affirmed, that *as many as received* our Lord, *to them gave he power to become the* Sons *of God, even to them that believe on his Name*, (St. John i. 12;) that we *are all the* children *of God, by faith in Chriſt Jeſus*, (Gall. iii. 26;) that *the Father has beſtowed ſuch love upon us, that we ſhould be called the* Sons *of God*, (1 John iii. 1.) And the *reaſon* of this manner of ſpeaking, is expreſly added by St. *Paul*, Rom. viii. 14; *For, as many as are led by the* Spirit *of God*, as many as give themſelves up to his guidance, and pay him a willing and cheerful Obedience, ſerving and imitating him as dutiful children, that is, *being born of the Spirit, they are the* Sons *of God*.

On the other ſide, vicious and corrupt men, are by a like Expreſſion ſtiled in Scripture, *the children of this World*, St. Luke xvi. 8; and very wicked and malicious Perſons, Sons of *Belial*, Sons of *Violence*, Sons of *Wickedneſs*, and Children of *the Devil*: Thus our Saviour, reproving the *Phariſees* for their extreme Malice and Wickedneſs, deſcribes it in the following manner; *Ye do*, ſaith he, *that which ye have ſeen with your Father; ye do the deeds of your Father; ye are of your Father the Devil, and the Luſts of your Father ye will do*; St. John viii. 38, 41, 44.

And in general, the two oppoſite ſorts of men, good and bad, are compared together under theſe characters, 1 *John* iii. 10, in the words immediately following the Text; and a diſtinguiſhing mark given, by which we may certainly diſcern them one from another: *In this the* children of God *are manifeſt, and the* children of the Devil; *Whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs, is not of God; neither he that loveth not his Brother*.

From this explication of the Phraſe, *being born of God*, it is eaſy to perceive what the Apoſtle St. *Paul* underſtands by the word *Adoption*; when he tells us that Chriſt came into the World *to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the* Adoption *of Sons*, Gal. iv. v; and that *we have not received the Spirit of bondage again to Fear, but the Spirit of* Adoption, *whereby we cry, Abba, Father*; Rom. viii. 15. It appears ſufficiently from what has been ſaid; that This *Adoption*, is not a particular or ſingle Grace, a particular gracious Act of God as has ſometimes been diſcourſed in a manner hardly intelligible; but it ſignifies plainly the very ſame thing in general, as being *children of God* or *born of him*: denoting on God's part that gracious Favour and Mercy of the Goſpel, whereby he pities the infirmities of thoſe who ſincerely endeavour to obey his commandments; and treats us, not as *Servants*, with the ſtrictneſs and ſeverity of a Maſter; but, as *children*, with the Love and tender Affection of a Father; and on our part, an Obligation to make ſuitable returns for ſo excellent a Privilege, by a willing and chearful Subjection to him in all things, as dutiful Children.

The *means* by which we attain to, and are made partakers of this high Privilege, are *Faith* and *Obedience*: Such a *Faith*, as enables us to conquer all the ſinful Temptations of the World; (1 *John* v. 1, 4.) *Whoſoever believeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt, is born of God*: And *whatſoever is* born *of God, overcometh the World*; For This *is the victory that overcometh the World, even our* Faith. And ſuch an *Obedience*, as evidences itſelf by the Practice of univerſal Righteouſneſs, in Imitation of the Holineſs of God himſelf; ch. ii. v. 29; *If ye know that* he *is righteous, ye know that every one that* doth *righteouſneſs is* born *of him*. The principal Inſtance of which univerſal Righteouſneſs, that the Scripture moſt earneſtly and conſtantly inſiſts upon *in particular*, and joins it together with the Love of *God*; is mutual Love, Charity, Goodneſs, towards our *Brethren*, and Forgiveneſs of injuries: *Beloved, let us love one another*, (1 John iv. 7; *for Love is of God; and every one that loveth, is* born *of God, and knoweth God*. And our Saviour

Saviour himself recommends doing Good even to our very enemies, from the same Arguments; St. *Matt.* v. 45; *That ye may be the* children *of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his Sun to rise on the evil and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.* SERM. LXVIII.

This is that divine and heavenly Temper which the Apostle in the Text describes by being *Born of God.* And because in the greater part of Christians, especially in those who were Converts from Heathenism, this excellent Disposition was no less than a *Total Change* from an entirely contrary State; from being dead *in trespasses and Sins*, to a *Life* of righteousness and true Holiness; therefore in Scripture it is frequently stiled *Regeneration* or the *new Birth*: *Except a man be* born again, saith our Saviour, *he cannot see the Kingdom of God*, St. John iii. 3; and St *Paul*, Tit. iii. 5; *According to his mercy he has saved us, by the washing of* Regeneration, *and renewing of the Holy Ghost*: and St. Pet. (1 ep. ch. i. ver. 3.) *Blessed be God, who has* begotten us again *unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Christ from the dead.* Concerning which *Regeneration*, because many Doctrines very difficult to be understood, have sometimes been taught; it is to be observed, that in like manner as a man by his natural Birth is not born with the Reason and Perfections of a man, but only with the Faculties and Possibilities of attaining those Perfections; so Regeneration or the Spiritual Birth, is not a thing worked upon a Man necessarily and in a Moment; but being begun in Baptism, is to be verified and made good by the improvement and practice of all Christian virtues during the whole course of our Lives; and is lost and destroyed by any habitual Wickedness, as the natural Life of the Body is by Diseases and Death.

Lastly, Because that pious Disposition, which the Apostle expresses by *being Born of God*, is what every Christian is indispensably *obliged* to arrive to; and what by his very Profession he is *supposed* to have already in some measure attained; and what the generality of Christians in the primitive and purest times actually *did* possess; therefore a man's being *born of God*, signifies in Scripture Phrase, the same as being a *true and sincere Christian*; and *Whosoever is born of God*, is as much as if the Apostle had said, *Whosoever pretends to be a good Christian.*

2*dly*, We are to consider in what Sense it is said, that whosoever has a just claim to this Character, *doth not commit Sin.* And here by *not committing Sin*, it is evident the Apostle does not mean, in the strict and absolute Sense, that any man can be perfectly and entirely sinless. No; in this Sense, *there is none Good, but One, that is God.* For he *chargeth even his Angels with Folly, and the Heavens are not pure in his sight; How much less, Man that is a worm; and the Son of Man which is a Worm.* But the meaning is, that a good Christian never allows himself in the *Habit*, of *any* known Sin; nor suffers himself to fall into the single *Acts*, of any of those great and enormous Crimes, which are expresly said to exclude Men from the Kingdom of Heaven. The Frailties and Infirmities of good men, which often raise groundless Fears and Scruples in the Breasts of melancholy and pious Persons; are not the things, which, in the Scripture-Sense of the word, denominate men *Sinners*. These are allowed for in the very original Constitution of the Gospel-covenant, and are hardly at all in the *New Testament* called by the Name of Sins; good men being said, notwithstanding these, to be *righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.* But Sin, in the *New Testament*, signifies most commonly, either the *Habit* of Vice; or at least, (which are equivalent to it in guilt,) the Acts of some *great* and *plain Crimes.* As when our Saviour tells us he will bid to *depart from him all the workers of Iniquity*; St. Luk. xiii. 27: and *that whosoever committeth Sin, is the Servant of Sin*; St. Joh. viii. 34: These plainly denote the general Custom or *Habit.* And to likewise do those declarations of the Apostles; that the *Wages of Sin is Death*, Rom. vi. 23; and that *he that committeth Sin, is of the Devil*; 1 Joh. iii. 8.

We use the word vulgarly in a different Signification, and so also does the Scripture itself, when it says that *All men are Sinners*, and *none righteous.* The meaning of which and the like expressions, in *some* places, is, to signify the great Corruption of the Generality of men at some *particular Time* or *Place*: Thus when we read, *Gen.* vi. 5; *God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the Earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*; 'Tis plain This was not intended for a Character of all Mankind at all times and in all places, but of the Generality of those who

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who lived at the Time of the Flood. In *other* places, the like Phraſes expreſs the great Corruption that is ſpread among Men of *all* Profeſſions; Thus when St. *Paul* affirms that *the Scripture has concluded* all *under Sin*, Gal. iii. 22; and that all *have ſinned, and come ſhort of the Glory of God*, Rom. iii. 23; his Intention in Theſe paſſages, is not to give a character of every individual Perſon in particular, but to declare in general, concerning the Nation of the *Jews* as well as concerning the *Gentiles*, (as he in expreſs words explains himſelf, ver. 9,) that *both Jews and Gentiles are all under Sin*; and that conſequently Both of them are equally obliged to believe in Chriſt, and have recourſe to the mercy of the Goſpel for Salvation. Laſtly, in *Other* places, the like manner of expreſſion ſignifies, that no man is free from failings and imperfections, from infirmities, ſurprizes, and inadvertencies: In This Senſe it is, that St. *James* confeſſes, that *in many things we offend all*, St. James iii. 2; and that *Job* declares of himſelf, *If I juſtify myſelf, my own mouth ſhall condemn me; if I ſay, I am perfect, it ſhall alſo prove me perverſe*; Job ix. 20. And when St. *John* declares, that *if we ſay we have no Sin we deceive ourſelves*, 1 Joh. i. 8; it is evident he cannot mean this of Sins properly ſo called in the Goſpel-Senſe, but only of unavoidable infirmities; becauſe he adds, almoſt in the very next words, *Theſe things I write unto you that ye ſin not*.

But now, *to commit Sin*, in the Scripture-Senſe, ſignifies to be knowingly and deliberately a Worker of Unrighteouſneſs; to fall into the *habitual* practice of *any* Vice whatever, or into the *Acts* of any of the greater and more enormous crimes; of *ſuch* Crimes as are evidently contrary to the great and plain deſign of the Commandments, and are included by St. *Paul* in the Catalogue of Sins which expreſly exclude men from the Kingdom of Heaven. And concerning Theſe the Apoſtle clearly and without reſerve declares, that *Whoſoever is born of God*, Whoſoever is a true and ſincere Chriſtian, *doth not* at all *commit Sin*.

3*dly*; Here is the *Reaſon* given, *why* no man, *who is born of God*, doth in the Senſe now explained, *commit Sin*. *For his* Seed *remaineth in him*. What is meant by *the Seed* here mentioned, our Saviour himſelf has explained to us, St. *Luke* viii. 5. 11; *A Sower went out to ſow his ſeed; and ſome fell by the way ſide, and ſome upon a rock, and ſome among thorns, and ſome on good ground*: And *the Seed*, ſaith he, *is the Word of God*; the Doctrine and Precepts of the Goſpel, the Principles of true Religion; which with the aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God always accompanying them, are the Ground and Foundation, the Root and Spring of all virtuous and holy Actions; the Principle of a new and heavenly Life: *God, of his own will*, ſaith St. *James*, begat *us with the word of Truth, that we ſhould be a kind of firſt-fruits of his creatures*; St. Jam. i. 18: and *We are born again*, ſaith St. *Peter*, *not of corruptible ſeed, but of incorruptible, even by the* word *of God which liveth and abideth for ever*; 1. Pet. i. 23. This word of God, theſe Principles of true Religion, the Doctrine and Inſtruction of the Goſpel, is by ſome received ſo careleſly and with ſo little attention, that it is preſently forgotten and leaves no impreſſion upon their Minds; as Corn ſown upon the beaten road, is loſt without ever entring into the earth at all. By others it is entertained with pleaſure at firſt; but either upon meeting with Difficulties it is ſoon deſerted, or by worldly buſineſs and pleaſures overwhelmed; As Corn ſown upon a rock, quickly withers for want of depth; and that which ſprings up among weeds, is commonly choaked and overgrown by them. But then laſtly by others it is received in ſuch a manner, as Seed is by good ground; *With an honeſt and good heart, having heard the word they* keep *it*, ſaith our Saviour, *and bring forth fruit with patience*; St. *Luke* viii. 15. The Phraſe, they *Keep or Retain* it, is exactly of the ſame import with that in the Text, that *His Seed* Remaineth *in him*. *Whoſoever is born of God*: whoſoever is a true and worthy Chriſtian, in *him* This *word* of God, this Principle of Life, *Remaineth*; The Motives and Arguments of Religion are throughly embraced by him and fixt in him, and have made a deep and laſting impreſſion upon his mind. The Doctrine of the Goſpel is entertained by him; not ſo ſlightly and ſuperficially, as either to be ſoon forgotten by careleſſneſs and neglect, or ſo as to be deſerted upon the approach of any troubles and difficulties, or ſo as to be over-ruled by any Temptations of Pleaſure and Profit; but he believes it heartily, and retains it firmly, and governs himſelf by it conſtantly; and it becomes in him an active and ruling Principle; the firſt ſpring and the continual guide and director of all the Actions of his Life. This is what the Scripture in purſuance of the fore-mentioned Similitude, ſtiles *being fruitful*, bringing forth the *Fruits of the Spirit*, and *bringing forth* much *fruit*;

fruit; Col. i. 10; and St. *Joh.* xv. 5. Such a man's *Faith* in God remains firm, and *overcometh the World*; his *Hope* continues ſtedfaſt, and as a ſure Anchor, preſerves him unmoved in all the changes and diſorders of the World; His *Charity* is univerſal in imitation of God, whoſe Goodneſs extends itſelf over all his Works, and whoſe Children we are if we obey his Commandments. SERM. LXVIII.

4*thly*; It remains to be enquired in the *Fourth* and *Laſt* place, how and in what Senſe it is affirmed by the Apoſtle, that ſuch a Perſon cannot *Sin, becauſe he is born of God.* The Gnoſticks, that is, men of perfect *Knowledge*, as they ſtiled themſelves; certain *Ancient* Deceivers, againſt whom in particular St. *John* argues in this whole Epiſtle; pretended that they were ſo perfect, and had ſo entire a *Knowledge* of God, and were ſo abſolutely in his Favour; that they *could* not by any means fall under his diſpleaſure: And ſome in *modern* times have from this and other the like paſſages in Scripture, concluded that there is an abſolute Impoſſibility of good mens falling away into a State of Sin, and conſequently under the divine Diſpleaſure. The *ancient* opinion of the Gnoſticks, who thought they could not loſe the favour of God, whatever ill practices they were guilty of; was ſo plainly impious and deſtructive of Religion, that St. *John* wrote this Epiſtle on purpoſe to prove, that it was infinitely abſurd for them to pretend to *know* God, and hope to continue in his Favour, while they knowingly and preſumptuouſly diſobeyed his Laws; and therefore he ſo frequently repeats it, and (alluding to their pretences of a moſt perfect *Knowledge* of God, he) inculcates it again and again, that *hereby* only *we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments*; and that whoſoever *ſaith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him.* The *latter* Opinion, concerning the Impoſſibility of good mens falling into a State of Sin; though it cannot indeed be directly charged with any ſuch Impiety as the former; yet is it a Doctrine ſo contrary to Scripture and Experience, ſo unreaſonable in itſelf, and of ſo bad conſequence in making men negligent and ſecure and unattentive to the continual warnings given us in Scripture to watch perpetually, and, when we are moſt confident of ſtanding, to *take heed, leſt we fall*; that it muſt needs be of ſervice to Religion, to ſhow how very weak and ill-grounded the Notion is.

When therefore the Apoſtle tells us, that *whoſoever is born of God*, cannot *ſin*; in order to underſtand the true meaning of the expreſſion, it is to be obſerved, that the word *Cannot*, in Scripture, as well as in common Uſe, ſignifies moſt frequently, not any abſolute and natural Impoſſibility; but what, morally ſpeaking, is not *likely* to come to paſs; what cannot *probably*, what cannot *without great difficulty*, what cannot *reaſonably* or *fitly* be done; what *ought not* to be done; what cannot be done *without forfeiting a man's character*, and *ceaſing to be what he was.* *It* Cannot *be*, ſaith our Saviour; that is, it is very unlikely; *that a prophet ſhould periſh out of Jeruſalem*; St. *Luke* xiii. 33. *The Fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit*, ſaith St. *Paul, and the Spirit againſt the Fleſh; ſo that ye* cannot, his Meaning is, ye cannot without great difficulty, *do the things that ye would*; Gal. v. 17. Men that Cannot *ceaſe from Sin*, ſaith St. *Peter*, 2 *Pet.* 2. 14; he means, whoſe confirmed evil Habits and long Cuſtoms of ſinning are exceeding hard to be broken off. *We Cannot do this thing*, ſaid the Sons of *Jacob*, Gen. xxxiv. 14; i. e. it is not fit, it is not reaſonable, it is not honourable for us, *to give our daughter to one that is uncircumciſed.* Again: *I* Cannot *do any thing till thou be come thither*, ſaid God himſelf to *Lot* fleeing towards *Zoar*, Gen. xix. 22; and our Saviour Could *do no mighty works*, ſaith St. *Mark*, in his own Country, *becauſe of their Unbelief*, St. *Mark*, vi. 5: 'Tis manifeſt theſe expreſſions were never intended to ſignify *Want of Power*; but that it was not fit, that it was not reaſonable nor agreeable to the deſigns and methods of Providence, that theſe things ſhould be done in thoſe particular Places and Circumſtances.

And thus likewiſe in the words of the Text; when the Apoſtle affirms that *Whoſoever is born of God*, Cannot *Sin*; Moſt evidently his meaning is not, that there is any *Impoſſibility* of his Sinning; but that he cannot Sin, without ceaſing to be what he was, without forfeiting his Character of being *born of God*: Even as a *juſt* man, *cannot deceive*; a *pious* man, *cannot blaſpheme*, a *good tree* (as our Saviour himſelf expreſſes it) *cannot bring forth bad fruit.* Not that there is any natural Impoſſibility of ſuch great Changes happening; but that it is a Contradiction, ſo long as things continue in their preſent State, and have not changed their whole Denomination. So far therefore is this expreſſion of the Apoſtle, from affording men any ground of vain confidence and aſſurance; that directly on the contrary, it is a caution and warning of a very great danger. 'Tis impoſſible

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for one that is born of God, to *commit Sin*, in the Sense before explained; Does it therefore follow, that we may safely be careless and secure? No; on the contrary, we ought *therefore* to be doubly vigilant lest we *commit Sin*; because our committing it, will be a demonstration, either that we never were at all the children of God, or else that we have parted with that Character. 'Tis impossible *that a good tree should bring forth bad fruit*; Are we thence to conclude, that how corrupt soever the fruit of such a tree proves, yet it must not be accounted bad fruit? No; but on the contrary, that the Tree itself is no longer good, but is become fit only *to be hewed down and cast into the Fire*. And that the Apostle *intended* the words to be understood thus by way of Caution, and not as a ground of Confidence; is evident, not only from Reason and from numberless other places of Scripture; but more particularly from the parallel place, in the *vth* chapter of this Epistle, ver. 18; where he says, *We know that whosoever is born of God, Sinneth not*; why? because there is an natural Impossibility of his falling into Sin? or because his Crimes, if he commit any, shall not be accounted to him as Sins? No; but because such a one is under an extraordinary Obligation to avoid Sin, and *Keepeth himself*, saith the Apostle, (with great care and diligence,) *and That wicked one touches him not*.

II. *Secondly*; The several Phrases in the Text being thus explained; The general Doctrine intended to be laid down by the Apostle in the words, appears plain and obvious, and needs neither Enlargement nor Application; namely, that *no true Christian* lives in the practice of any known Sin; but the Principles of his Religion (a true Sense of God and of the obligations of Virtue) remaining firm in him, are both the Spring and the Rule of all his Actions; and he can no more fall into any habitual wickedness, than a *good Tree can bring forth bad Fruit*. If he does, he forfeits his character; and has no longer any Title to that high Privilege, of being a *Child of God*: unless he recovers himself again by a Repentance as exemplary as his Fall from so excellent a State was scandalous. A Shadow does not so greatly differ, from the Substance of which it seems to be a resemblance; nor a faint Picture, from the living Person whom it was intended to represent; as a man who bears only the Name and Profession of a Christian, does from such a one as is in Scripture described to be *Born of God*. The great End and Intention of Christ's Religion; the chief, the whole Use and Design of the Gospel; is to oblige us to be better and more virtuous, than other men who want these assistances, and have not the encouragement of such glorious expectations. 'Tis to lay stronger obligations upon us, to live up to a more excellent rule, and perfect a more acceptable Obedience, in all our several Relations and Circumstances of Life. That those whom God has endued with *Power* and *Riches*, and *Honour*, may by a more extensive and diffusive Goodness, imitate *His* exercise of Power and Greatness, who is Lord of Lords and King of Kings; That *Inferiors* may (in all just and lawful Cases) obey with Conscience and with a true Sense of Duty; knowing that wise Government and good Order, is the Support of the World; The Constitution of God for maintaining Peace and Order amongst Men, and the greatest Blessing of Providence: And lastly, that *All*, in their respective Stations, by mutual Love and Assistance, by universal Charity and Good-Will, by true Piety, Righteousness and Holiness, and the Practice of all Christian Virtues; may here furnish their Minds with such habitual Qualifications, as will fit them hereafter to become worthy Subjects of the eternal Kingdom of God.

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SERMON LXIX.

That Mens True Happineſs conſiſts in the Favour of GOD.

PSAL. iv. 6.

There be many that ſay, Who will ſhew us any good? Lord lift thou *up the Light of thy countenance upon us.*

THERE is nothing wherein all mankind ſo naturally and univerſally agree, as in deſiring and ſearching after their own Happineſs; and yet nothing wherein they differ more, than in their ſeveral means of purſuing it. All men naturally enquire, and ſearch after what may make them happy; *There be many that ſay, Who will ſhew us any good?* But while vicious and debauched perſons, Purſuers of forbidden Pleaſures and unrighteous Gains, weary themſelves in vain, about things wherein is no Profit; the Pſalmiſt determines, that true, ſolid and laſting Happineſs, is to be found only in the Knowledge and in the Favour of God; in the practice

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practice of Virtue and true Religion. *Lord, lift* Thou *up the light of thy countenance upon us.*

From the words therefore we may obſerve theſe three things;

1*ſt*. That there is neceſſarily implanted in the very Nature of Man, a Deſire of promoting his own Happineſs. 2*dly*; That wicked and corrupt men ſeek this Happineſs in the ſinful Enjoyments of the preſent Life; and that their chuſing ſo to do, is their great Error and Folly. 3*dly*; That righteous and good men, believe their *chief* Happineſs to conſiſt in the Knowledge and in the Favour of God; in the imitation of his Nature, and in the obedience of his Commands; and that their acting according to this belief, is the greateſt and trueſt Wiſdom.

I. *Firſt*; There is neceſſarily implanted in the very Nature of Man, a deſire of promoting his own Happineſs. This is a ſelf-evident Truth, and needs no Proof. For however men differ in other things, yet in this it is manifeſt they *All* agree, that true Happineſs is their ultimate end. Learned and Ignorant, Wiſe men and Fooliſh, the Righteous and the Wicked do all conſent in this point; and the only difference between them lies, in determining *wherein* their true Happineſs conſiſts, and by *what methods* it may beſt be attained. As many as make a right judgment in this matter, and act accordingly in the whole courſe of their lives; theſe are Wiſe and Good, rational and virtuous men: They on the contrary, who place their Happineſs in a wrong Object, or purſue it by improper and unrighteous means, are ignorant and wicked. Yet nevertheleſs all men equally intend to purſue their own Happineſs; and even They who make themſelves the moſt extremely miſerable by the greateſt Follies and moſt deſtructive Vices, even Theſe are ſtill ſeduced into it by ſome falſe pretence, and ſome appearance of Happineſs: Only this their Error proceeds from their own Negligence or Wilfulneſs; they are what our Saviour calls *Fools* and Blind; and *That* makes them altogether inexcuſable. Daily experience ſhows, how inſatiably ambitious men purſue after Honour; and frequently ſacrifice all ſenſe of Virtue, and the ſatisfaction of a good Conſcience, for the attainment of a vain imaginary Greatneſs: Likewiſe how unreaſonably covetous and oppreſſive men, ſuffer perpetual fatigue of Body and uneaſineſs of Mind, in the unrighteous purſuit of what they hardly ever enjoy. And how abſurdly the Voluptuous deſtroy themſelves in following after Pleaſure; and, for momentary gratifications of brutal Folly, bring upon themſelves frequently the acuteſt Pains of Body, and the much *more* intolerable Burden of a tormented Mind. On the other ſide, *dying* men, who look back with an unprejudiced eye on all thoſe ſhort-lived Vanities, and who are now drawing near to that unchangeable determination, which is to fix them in a happy or in a miſerable Eternity: How meanly, how contemptibly do They always think, of all the ſinful, nay even *innocent* enjoyments of this preſent World? And what a *great*, what a *juſt* concern are they under, in reſpect of their *Future* State? that is, in reſpect of *That* State, wherein Now their *only Hope* of Happineſs remains? And not with regard to Eternity only, but even in this *preſent Life itſelf*, True Religion is ſo far from diſcouraging men in their *ſearch after Happineſs*, that it forbids not the enjoyment of any one temporal Bleſſing which God has created for the uſe of man, but only thoſe diſorderly Inſtances or unreaſonable Exceſſes, by which fooliſh men make both themſelves and others miſerable. Thus ſelf-evident it is, that all men are neceſſarily by the very direction of their Nature employed in the purſuit after Happineſs; and there is no need to enlarge further upon it. There be many that ſay; That is, *All men* naturally inquire, *Who will ſhew us any good?*

II. *Secondly*; The next thing to be obſerved, is, That wicked and corrupt men ſeek this Happineſs in the ſinful enjoyments of the preſent Life; and that their chooſing ſo to do, is their great Errour and Folly. That too great a part of men, are, *like the Beaſts that periſh*, wholly intent upon the ſenſual Enjoyments of this preſent Life; without Any regard to the Dictates of Reaſon, or the Obligations of Religion; and that they have very little and ſlight concern for what is to come *hereafter*; is too evident to be denied: But then it is alſo no leſs evident, to any one who conſiders the true nature and final iſſue of things, that ſuch Perſons act to the higheſt degree irrationally and unwiſely; and that the things, by the enjoyment of which they propoſe to be happy, are by no means Sufficient to That End. The Enjoyments of this preſent world are ranked by St. *John* under theſe three heads, *the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life*;

life; 1 Joh. 2. 16; that is, Pleasure, Riches, and Honour. These are (as the Apostle there stiles them) *all that is in the world*, that is, all the Happiness that this present world can afford. But now *every one of these in particular*, (even where the enjoyment of them is *innocent*, much more when the sting of *Sin* is annexed,) has a great mixture of Evil attending it, has at best much emptiness and imperfection in it, has much unsatisfactoriness and disappointment going along with it; and *all of them taken together*, are very far from being able to make a man truly happy, because they still want the two principal and most necessary Qualifications of Happiness, *viz. Perfection* of Degree, and Continuance in *Duration*: They are not at best compleat enough to satisfy the Mind of Man; and, if they were, yet they cannot continue long enough to maintain and preserve its Happiness. For if all other things be supposed to happen to the best advantage, yet the World itself comes to an end at the Conclusion of a man's own Life, and then we are sure all its enjoyments perish. *First*; Every one *in particular*, of the Enjoyments of this present Life, has a great deal of Evil mixt with it, has much unsatisfactoriness and disappointment attending it. To instance in *Pleasure*, That great Idol of mankind; for the sake of which, all other things are desired; and which alone has the greatest pretence to make men happy; This *itself*, is of all other things the *most* imperfect and disappointing, and has the most *Evil* mixt with it and consequent upon it. By *Pleasure*, I would here be understood to mean, *Sensual pleasure*; that is, such as vicious and debauched Persons call by that Name; Sensual pleasure, or Voluptuousness, as it is opposed to the rational and temperate enjoyments of a virtuous man and a good Christian. For otherwise, Pleasure in general as it is the Enjoyment of Good, and the Desire of Pleasure as it signifies the Love of ourselves and the seeking our own Happiness, is one of the first and most natural Principles implanted in Mankind, which neither ought nor can be laid aside by any man: And this very Principle *itself*, affords an undeniable argument, why men ought willingly to part with the short and unreasonable pleasures of *Sin*, for the unchangeable and eternal Happiness of *Heaven*. When therefore we affirm that Pleasure is infinitely insufficient to make any person truly happy, we are always to understand *such* Sensual pleasure, as vicious and debauched men fix their thoughts upon, in opposition to the wise and rational Pleasures of Temperance and Religion. Now, that Pleasure in *this* sense, is very far from making men happy, is evident both from Experience and from the Reason of things. For no men plainly are so extremely miserable, as those who thus pretend to be the greatest Voluptuaries. They toil and labour for that which is not, and are frequently disappointed of what they most desire, and undergo perpetual uneasiness both of Body and Mind, and endure much Labour for momentary Pleasures; for Pleasures which themselves are nothing but Disappointment at the best, far short of what their vain imaginations represented, and are allayed with innumerable mixtures of Pain and Trouble, and end in Sorrow and Delusion, and leave behind them nothing but Remorse and Repentance; And how can such persons as these esteem themselves happy? In like manner, *Riches*, the next instance wherein corrupt Minds usually place their Happiness; are no less insufficient to that end, than Sensual Pleasure. In the hands of generous and worthy men, of charitable and pious Christians, they *may* indeed become instruments of great Benefit, occasions of much advantage to Religion, and means of true Happiness. But to make a vicious man happy, a man whose Happiness is not founded in God and Religion, they are altogether ineffectual. For, besides the uncertainty of the things themselves, that *Riches often make themselves wings and fly away; they are moreover* (as *Solomon* wisely observes) *often kept by the owners thereof to their hurt*; Eccles. v. 13; to serve the Ends of Oppression, Unrighteousness, and Debauchery.

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Lastly; Honour, that great Hope and Aim of the Ambitious, is neither a *real* Good, nor can it be called our *own*. The Virtues for which a worthy man is honoured, are far more valuable than the Honour which the world pays to his worth; and these virtues can alone remain with him, when perhaps that Honour and Esteem may be turned into Reproach. For in this erroneous world, men are frequently honoured for what is truly dishonourable, and sometimes they are calumniated for that which really deserves the highest Praises. Now it is evident one Man cannot be made truly happy or unhappy, by another's false and

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miſtaken opinion: For this were to make the Happineſs of the beſt and wiſeſt Men, depend upon the weak and falſe imaginations of the moſt ignorant and fooliſh. The Honour therefore and Applauſe of a deceitful world, cannot really make a Man happy, nor the want of it be the cauſe of a wiſe Man's miſery.

Add to all this, that beſides the peculiar inſufficiency of every one of theſe things, of Pleaſure, Riches and Honour, each conſidered in *themſelves*; they are moreover each of them deſtroyed, as to their Power of making Men happy, by the Want of Either or Both of the *other*. Nay, ſuppoſing a Man to enjoy every one and *All* of them *together*, in the greateſt Fulneſs and Affluence imaginable; yet even ſtill they would want the two principal and moſt neceſſary Qualifications requiſite to make a Man truly Happy; namely, *Perfection in Degree*, and *Continuance of Duration*. They cannot at beſt compleat the Satisfaction of Man's mind; and if they *were* able to do this, yet they could not continue long enough to maintain and preſerve it. Whatever will make the Mind of Man happy, muſt be able to ſatisfy it both in its whole Capacity and in its whole Duration; and whatever is not ſufficient to effect This, cannot be Man's chief and final Happineſs. Now all theſe things put together, wherein worldly and irreligious minds uſually place their Happineſs, are at beſt infinitely deficient in *theſe two reſpects*: For

1*ſt*; They cannot make us happy in our whole, nor in the beſt part of our capacity. Man conſiſts of a Senſitive Body and of a Rational Soul, and it is either neceſſary to his well-being that he be happy in both theſe Parts; or, if he *may* poſſibly be happy by the Satisfaction of a Virtuous mind without any ſenſual and bodily Pleaſure; yet it is very evident he cannot on the other ſide, be made happy by the pleaſures of the *Body* only, without the Satisfaction of a Virtuous mind. The Capacity of Man's mind, is great; and its Deſires and Expectations, its Hopes and Fears are boundleſs: And it is well known by experience, that all the Enjoyments of the preſent Life, without Virtue and true Religion, can by no means either ſatisfy its deſires and expectations, or prevent its fears and diſcontents. Theſe things therefore, are greatly inſufficient to make a man truly happy, ſince they cannot make him ſo in the beſt and principal part of his Being. But

2*dly*; Suppoſing they *were* able to ſatisfy the whole capacity of a Man's mind, yet they could not make him happy for the whole, nor for the greateſt part of his Duration. Dying Men are always ſufficiently ſenſible of this; and living Men, if they were wiſe, would ſee and underſtand this moſt important Truth, before their eyes were too late opened by the extremity of that laſt Neceſſity. Nothing can be more evident, than that Eternity bears no proportion to Time; and nothing can be plainer, than that theſe things which Men dote upon now in the preſent Time, will do them no Service in the Ages of Eternity: Why then will they not ſee, that theſe things are not their true and proper Happineſs? But all wicked and debauched perſons are infatuated and blinded, and *will* place their Happineſs in that which profiteth not. This therefore their opinion is their Folly, and, if they live according to it, muſt be their deſtruction.

Having thus ſhown, (which was the 2*d* thing I propoſed,) that worldly and corrupt minds place all their Happineſs in the ſinful enjoyments of the preſent life; and that their chuſing ſo to do, is their great error and folly; I proceed now in the

III. *Third* place to ſhow, that virtuous and good Men place their chief Happineſs in the Knowledge and Favour of God; in the Practice of Virtue and true Religion; and that their acting according to this Principle, is the greateſt and indeed the only true Wiſdom: *There be many that ſay, who will ſhew us any good? Lord, lift* Thou *up the light of thy countenance upon us.* For the clearer explication of which Propoſition, I ſhall endeavour briefly to ſet forth, *wherein* this true Happineſs conſiſts; and *in what reſpects* it excells the Happineſs of ſenſual and corrupt minds. And

1*ſt*; The *firſt* part of the Happineſs of good men, conſiſts in their Contemplating with Delight, and Meditating with Pleaſure, on the Perfections of God the Supreme

preme Good. These Perfections are manifested in the *Works*, and in the *Laws* of God; and good Men according to their several capacities, contemplate with Pleasure, and meditate with Delight, upon the several manifestations of these divine Perfections. Virtuous minds even of the meanest capacities, see enough in the most obvious and superficial view of the divine works, to excite in them a deep Sense and Admiration, of the Almighty Power, the Unsearchable Wisdom, and the Eternal Providence of God; and they see enough in the first and most easy representation of his Laws, to fill their Thoughts with the most awful fear of his Justice, and with the most ardent Love of his abundant Goodness. But good Men of larger capacities and greater advantages, see yet further into the Wisdom of the Works and of the Laws of God: The Contemplation therefore of these things, affords a great and solid Satisfaction to virtuous and religious minds; and this Satisfaction will grow up with the improvements of their Knowledge and Virtue here, to a perfect and unspeakable Happiness in the Enjoyments of the World to come. SERM. LXIX.

2dly; The next part of the Happiness of virtuous and good Men, is the sense of God's present *favour* to them, arising from the Conscience of *their* agreeableness and conformity to *his* holy and divine Will. They know both from their natural notion of God, and from the revealed declarations of his Will, that the *light of his countenance* is, as the Text expresses it, *lift up upon* the Righteous, that is, that his Favour and Protection always *accompanies righteous and just* Men; and by the testimony of their own conscience, compared with the written Word of God, they know and humbly rejoice that they themselves are in some measure *such*. The Favour therefore that God bears to virtuous and good Men, they find belongs to themselves; and this affords them at all times and in all cases, a solid and rational Satisfaction. There is a careless Ease which arises from Error, and there is a delusive Pleasure which arises from Wickedness; but Both these Satisfactions are short and inconstant; and they lead to Folly, and terminate in Misery. But this Happiness of virtuous and religious minds, which arises from the practice of Virtue and from the favour of God, is as certain and constant as the Nature and Constitution of things, as the Truth and Veracity of God; and cannot be taken from them, even by Persecution itself.

3dly; This Happiness of righteous and good Men is compleated and perfected, by the *expectation* of eternal Rewards, with which *Hope* they are supported *here*; and by the actual *possession* of them, which they shall enjoy *hereafter*. This is a Happiness equal to the Desires and Hopes of a rational and immortal Soul; a Happiness, *worthy* of *God* to give, and *adequate* to the capacity of an *immortal* Spirit to desire. In this state, all the desires and expectations of the Soul will be turned into Fruition; and all its hopes will be swallowed up in the real enjoyment of inexpressible Felicity. In a Word, all its faculties and capacities will here be satisfied, and That Satisfaction will live and continue, as long as the immortal soul itself.

Having thus briefly described, *what* the Happiness of righteous and good men is; I presume we need not enter into a particular comparison of it with the Happiness of vicious and corrupt minds, to show *in what respects it* is superior to theirs; and to demonstrate that good mens preferring this solid and substantial Happiness, before the empty and deceitful pleasures of Sin, is the greatest and indeed the only true Wisdom. I shall only observe in a word, that this Happiness, which is the Reward of Virtue, exceeds all other pleasures infinitely, in the two fore-mentioned essential Qualifications of Happiness; *viz.* Perfection in Degree, and Continuance of Duration. The Psalmist thus describes them both: Ps. xvi. 11; *In thy presence is* fulness *of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures* for evermore.

The Application, wherewith I shall conclude, shall be This only: That from what has been said, there arises matter of great comfort to virtuous and good Men at *all* times, but *especially* at the hour of death. Vicious minds place their Happiness in the enjoyment of the Pleasures of this sinful world; and when this world comes to an End, as it does to every Man at the Conclusion of his own life; where then will *their* Happiness be? But he that places his Happiness in the Knowledge, and Love, and Imitation of God, in following the dictates of Reason

SERM. LXIX. Reaſon and true Religion, *here*; ſhall enjoy it alſo in theſe things *hereafter*; for God, and his Perfections continue for ever. And when the Righteous ſhall ſhine forth in That Day, as the Son in the Kingdom of their Father; then ſhall the Wicked be ſenſible of their own Folly, and ſhall cry out, as it is moſt elegantly expreſſed in the book of *Wiſdom*, ch. v. 4; *We fools accounted his Life madneſs, and his End to be without Honour; How is he numbred among the children of God, and his Lot is among the Saints?*

SERMON LXX.

That Godlineſs generally makes Men happy in this Life.

1 TIM. iv. 8.

---Godlineſs is profitable to all things, having promiſe of the Life that now is.---

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THERE being ſeveral Paſſages in Scripture, wherein on the one hand bleſſings and great proſperity, are promiſed to the righteous; with length of life, and every thing that can conduce to make it happy; with the Love of God, and the Favour of Men; And yet on the other hand there being not fewer Texts, wherein the afflictions of good Men in this preſent World are emphatically deſcribed; wherein all things are declared to come alike to all; or, if there be any Difference, that the righteous are ſure to have the greateſt ſhare in afflictions and diſappointments, in Troubles and Perſecutions of all kinds: From theſe words of the Apoſtle therefore, I ſhall endeavour at this time to ſet

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this matter in its true light, and ſhow how far and in what ſenſe each of theſe ſeemingly different declarations muſt be underſtood to be properly and ſtrictly true.

That Virtue and good Manners do in their own nature *tend*, to promote the Happineſs both of Mankind in general, and of every ſingle perſon in particular, is evident and undeniable; and if all Men were ſincerely religious, (ſo that the numberleſs Miſeries and Calamities ariſing from the Wickedneſs of Men, were prevented,) this Truth would viſibly evidence itſelf in fact, and appear experimentally in the Happy State and Conſtitution of the World. For almoſt all the Calamities we Now feel, do apparently proceed from Mens Vices: Wars and Deſolations and all their conſequent Miſeries, are the manifeſt effects either of unbounded Ambition, or of unreaſonable Revenge: Private quarrels and contentions, ariſe all either from open malice, or from ſecret and groundleſs peeviſhneſs: Poverty and Want come not often upon men, but either through their own Negligence, or by the Fraud, Injuſtice, and Oppreſſion of others, Sickneſs and Diſeaſes themſelves, are frequently and in great meaſure the conſequences of Intemperance; brought by Men upon themſelves, or perhaps inherited from their Parents: Nay even thoſe extraordinary calamities, which ſeem leaſt of all to have any dependance upon mens own actions, ſuch as Plagues and Peſtilences, Fires, Famines, and the like; even theſe are ſtill the Conſequences of Sin; being Judgments inflicted by the direction of Providence, for the puniſhment of Nations, Families, or particular Perſons.

Could All Men be prevailed upon to be pious toward God; ſober and diligent in their *own* affairs; juſt and faithful in their dealings; and friendly and charitable, according to their abilities, to *others*; the Happineſs of the World would be greater, than can eaſily be imagined. But ſince this is more than can be hoped for; yet every perſon, by doing his *own* duty, may contribute ſomething towards ſo great a Benefit, and at leaſt do much towards his *own particular* Happineſs: Eſpecially if we add to this, the Bleſſing of God, and the Protection of Providence; which without controverſy cannot but be generally moſt favourable to virtuous and good Men. The Wiſer Philoſophers among the Heathens themſelves, did not fail to make Obſervations of this matter, and to improve it in their diſcourſes for the encouragement of virtue. In Scripture, God's Promiſes of this nature to the *Jews*, are innumerable: Length of days, riches and honour, ſafety from their enemies, or victory over them; are promiſed in numberleſs places of the *Old Teſtament*: And even in the *New Teſtament*, St. *Paul* writing to a *Chriſtian* Biſhop, tells him, that *godlineſs has the promiſe of the Life that now is*; 1 Tim. iv. 8. But ſuppoſe all theſe things to Fail; and that a Good Man comes ſhort of all thoſe Bleſſings which are generally conſequent upon Virtue; and not only ſo, but be moreover hated, afflicted and perſecuted for the ſake of Virtue and true Religion; In this Caſe, a ſettled Peace in a Man's own Conſcience, a well-grounded Aſſurance of the Favour of God, and the Love and Affection of all unprejudic'd good Men, will ſtill attend him; and no Force can deprive him of *Them*. Theſe are Things *ſo* conſiderable, and of ſo *great* weight, that our Saviour himſelf ſeems to make them an hundred-fold better, than what a Man in Perſecution ordinarily loſes; and ſome have ſtrained this Argument ſo far, as to affirm Virtue to be a ſufficient reward to itſelf in all Caſes, even though it had no reſpect to a future reward.

But now if we view things as they are frequently repreſented on the other ſide, we ſhall have a very different and almoſt contrary Proſpect. For though it be indeed undeniably certain, that Virtue has both in itſelf the true foundations of happineſs, and alſo the greateſt probabilities of the concurrence of outward cauſes to promote its proſperity in the World; yet in event it is by experience found true, that the Wickedneſs of the greater part of Mankind does ſo far prevail againſt nature and reaſon, as often to oppreſs the Virtue of the Few. Good Men are frequently afflicted and impoveriſhed, and made a prey to the Covetouſneſs and Ambition of the wicked. Providence itſelf ſeems ſometimes to withdraw its interpoſition, and ſuffers the Righteous to be involved promiſcuouſly in many Calamities with the Wicked. The Philoſophers of old obſerved this; and from the unequal diſtribution of good and evil in the preſent life, wiſely and ſtrongly argued for the certainty of a future. The *Jews*, to whom were made eſpecial

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Promiſes of Temporal good, had yet experience enough of this truth, to raiſe their minds from the enjoyment of this world to the expectation of a better. *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, though they were the choſen and beloved of God, *yet few and evil were the days of their Pilgrimage, and at laſt themſelves received not the Promiſe; but looked for a City hereafter, which hath foundations, whoſe Builder and Maker is God.* *David*, though a Man after God's own heart, excepting in the inſtance of one great Crime; yet lived almoſt all his days in trouble and ſorrow; and at that very time, he ſaw the wicked in ſuch proſperity, as raiſed ſcruples in his mind concerning the Providence of God, and the Equity of its diſtributions. *Solomon* after *him* obſerved, that all things in this world came alike to all; that it fared with the righteous as with the wicked; and that no man could judge either of the Love or Hatred of God towards him, by what happened to him in this preſent Life. Or if God *did* deliver them, (as he ſometimes did in a miraculous manner,) from Judgments of his own immediate inflicting, yet were they ſtill perſecuted by the malice of wicked and cruel men: *They were ſtoned*, (as the Apoſtle elegantly repreſents it in the xith to the *Hebrews*,) *they were ſawn aſunder, were tempted, were ſlain with the ſword; they wandered about in ſheep-ſkins, and goat-ſkins, being deſtitute, afflicted, tormented: Of whom the world was not worthy: They wandered in deſarts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.* And all this happened to good Men even in the time of the *Jewiſh* diſpenſation. Under the *Goſpel*, the State of things may ſeem to be yet much worſe. Chriſtianity itſelf propoſes hardſhips and mortification, afflictions and bearing the Croſs, perſecution and ſufferings; and the malice of wicked men hath improved theſe evils ſo far to the diſadvantage of the righteous, as that St. *Paul* himſelf confeſſes, *if in this life only we had hope, Chriſtians were of all Men the moſt miſerable.* All theſe things muſt be acknowledged to be true; and yet at the ſame time it muſt alſo be confeſſed on the other ſide; that Godlineſs hath certainly in ſome reſpect the promiſe of *this* life, as well as of that which is to come. It may not therefore be improper, nor without its juſt Uſe, to ſtate the limits of theſe two different appearances of things, and to conſider in what Senſe each of them is properly to be underſtood; rather than to deſcribe ſingly either the advantages or diſadvantages of virtue in the preſent Life, further than the nature of things and the mixt circumſtances of this State will juſtly bear.

I. *Firſt* then; It is to be obſerved, that under the *Jewiſh* diſpenſation, temporal promiſes were moſt expreſly made to Obedience: And moſt particularly, with regard to the *national Succeſs* of the righteous againſt their *publick* Enemies. So that *Moſes* had great reaſon to cry out, *Deut.* xxxii. 29; *O that they were wiſe, that they underſtood theſe things! How ſhould one chaſe a thouſand, and two put ten thouſand to flight, except their rock had ſold them, and the Lord had ſhut them up!* In like manner *David* in many of his Pſalms deſcribes with great emphaſis the bleſſedneſs of the righteous: Thus *Pſ.* i. 3. *He ſhall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his ſeaſon; his leaf alſo ſhall not wither, and whatſoever he doth ſhall proſper*: Again (*Pſ.* cxii 1.) *Bleſſed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments; his ſeed ſhall be mighty upon earth, the generation of the upright ſhall be bleſſed; Riches and plenteouſneſs ſhall be in his houſe, and his righteouſneſs endureth for ever.* And again, *Pſ.* xci. throughout: *Whoſo dwelleth under the defence of the moſt High, ſhall abide under the Shadow of the Almighty*: *He ſhall deliver thee from the ſnare of the hunter, and from the noiſome peſtilence; Thou ſhalt not be afraid for any terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day; For the peſtilence that walketh in darkneſs, nor for the ſickneſs that deſtroyeth in the noon day; A thouſand ſhall fall beſide thee, and ten thouſand at thy right hand, but it ſhall not come nigh thee; There ſhall no evil happen unto thee, nor any plague come nigh thy dwelling.* (And *Prov.* iii. 16, 17.) But now under the *Goſpel*-diſpenſation, wherein Life and Immortality are more clearly brought to light, and the eternal rewards and puniſhments of a future State more expreſly revealed; Providence may ſeem to be much *leſs* exact in the diſtribution of temporal things: there being no reaſon, that good men ſhould now expect, ſuch a conſtant affluence of temporal bleſſings; ſince the eternal happineſs of their future State is ſo fully and plainly diſcovered to them: and on the other hand there being

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ing no neceſſity that temporal judgments ſhould now ſo certainly overtake the wicked, ſince the eternal wrath of God is ſo expreſly revealed from Heaven againſt all their ungodlineſs and unrighteous dealings. But this Obſervation alone, is not ſufficient: For *good* men, even under the *Jewiſh* diſpenſation were frequently oppreſſed and afflicted; being either involved in publick calamities ſent down by the Judgments of God, or perſecuted and deſtroyed by the malice and injuſtice of Men: So that the righteous very ſeldom enjoyed the Benefit of God's temporal bleſſings, except when in the Days of wiſe and pious Princes the whole Nation was under a general diſpoſition, to live in regular Obedience to the Law of God. And in ſuch a Caſe as That, Righteouſneſs now under the *Chriſtian* Diſpenſation would certainly flouriſh with very great temporal bleſſings, as well as it did in the times of the *Jews*; and Virtue would enjoy the promiſes of the *preſent* life, as well as of that which is to come.

II. *Secondly*; Therefore, it is to be obſerved in the *next* place, and the Obſervation holds *more* univerſally true; that Religion and Virtue, whenever they obtain *generally*, ſo as to prevail in a *nation*, do bring along with them very great temporal bleſſings. Godlineſs hath the promiſe of the Life that now is; that is, where it becomes the temper and habit of a people; where it is entertained and prevails ſo far, as to have room to produce its juſt and natural effects; there it eſtabliſhes great and laſting happineſs. *Particular* pious Perſons may be very unproſperous, and unſucceſsful in their wordly Affairs; nay, may meet with the greateſt Diſcouragements and Misfortunes whatſoever: But for the moſt part, the reaſon *why* any virtuous Man falls into any ſuch calamity, is not becauſe he himſelf is religious, but becauſe others about him are *not* ſo: So that the proper and natural effect of Virtue, is to make Men happy; and the only reaſon why at any time it does not actually produce That Effect; is becauſe it does not ſufficiently prevail. *Righteouſneſs*, ſaith *Solomon*, *exalteth a nation, but ſin is a reproach to any people*, Prov. xiv. 34; that is, though it *may* ſometimes happen otherwiſe in *ſingle* and *private* caſes, yet *this* is the natural and *univerſal* Effect of things, in their *general* and proper Tendency; and particular good Men's being hated, perſecuted, and oppreſſed, is no more contrary to what the Apoſtle affirms of Godlineſs having the promiſe of this life, than any other cauſe can therefore juſtly be ſaid not to be what it is, becauſe for want of being right applied, or by being for the preſent overpowered through the prevalency of ſome greater oppoſite ſtrength, it be hindered from producing its juſt and natural effect. Virtue and Righteouſneſs are clearly the only means, that *can* make Men happy even in this preſent ſtate; and if all Men would be truly and ſincerely religious; the promiſe of God would have its full accompliſhment, and Men *would* generally be reaſonably happy, even here upon earth. What particular good Men ſuffer here through other Mens vices, ſhall be abundantly recompenſed to them hereafter in a future State; but if other Men would be alſo religious, as *they* are, they would all become generally happy both here as well as hereafter. In Paradiſe God created man innocent, and placed him in a happy ſeat; and if he had continued his innocency, he had alſo continued his happineſs; and his poſterity, if *they* had likewiſe continued innocent, would have continued to have been made happy by their Religion and Virtue *here*; and that happineſs would only have been continued and increaſed, by God's free gift of eternal Life to them hereafter. But man fell ſoon into Sin; and God thereupon curſed the earth for his ſake, and deſtroyed the beauty of that divine Workmanſhip, becauſe man was not worthy to continue in ſo happy a Seat. After this, death and miſery entered into the world by Sin; and beſides God's curſe upon the earth, the wicked lives of men have all along made them doubly miſerable, by an innumerable train of calamities and follies. Nevertheleſs even in this corrupt eſtate, whatever unequal Sufferings particular good perſons have fallen into, it is certain that whole Nations have almoſt always been proportionably proſperous or miſerable as they improved in Virtue or degenerated into Vice. The *Roman* Hiſtorians aſſure us, that the foundations of that great empire were laid in the Frugality, Temperance, and exact Juſtice of their Anceſtors; But when the Luxury and Vices of ſome neighbouring Nations crept in and began to ſpread among them; that brave People, who from nothing grew by their Virtue to be Maſters of the world,

world, weakned afterwards by their Vices fell again to Nothing; and their mighty empire came by degrees to be divided among their conquered Nations. But not to fetch examples from profane hiſtories; it is very largely recorded in Scripture, how great and happy the People of the *Jews* were, when under any pious Prince, they lived in remarkable obedience to the law of God. It is related particularly of *Solomon*, that *God gave him peace from all his enemies round about, and that he paſſed all the Kings of the Earth in riches and wiſdom, and that he made ſilver in Jeruſalem as ſtones, and cedar trees as the ſycamores, which are in the low plains, for abundance*; 2 Chron. ix. 22, 27. In like manner under the *Chriſtian* diſpenſation, great is the peace, and happineſs which the prophets foretel ſhould happen, *when the Kingdom of the Meſſiah ſhould be eſtabliſhed upon the earth; and Princes, who call themſelves Chriſtians, ſhould agree to promote Chriſtianity indeed: The wolf ſhall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard ſhall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child ſhall lead them*; Iſaiah xi. 6 Which prophecies do at leaſt ſignify thus much, that if the Religion of Chriſt were univerſally embraced and duly practiſed, ſo as to have its natural and full effect, it would fill the world with very great peace and happineſs; *when righteouſneſs were eſtabliſhed as an univerſal Law, and the earth were full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the Seas*: When unreaſonable contentions and uncharitable diviſions among Chriſtians, ariſing from Ambition and Love of Worldly Power, ſhall be laid aſide, and all Men ſhall agree in that great Rule of Unity and Charity, the everlaſting Goſpel. *When that Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth ſhall be deſtroyed; which has cauſed all Nations to drink of the wine of her fornication; and has preſumed to ſit in the ſeat of God, and to change laws and times, and to equal the Doctrines of men with the commandments of God, and to uſe force and violence in matters of Religion, ſo that in her is found the blood of all that were ſlain upon the earth.* All which is ſo plainly declared in the Holy Scriptures, that one of the great Artifices by which religious Tyranny has been kept up in the World, has been the diſcouraging Men from conſidering ſoberly the prophetick part of the *New Teſtament*. It is evident therefore, that true Religion and Virtue, whenever they obtain generally and are practiſed in a Nation, do bring along with them very great temporal Bleſſings. But

III. *Thirdly*; As to the caſe of particular and private Perſons; about whom is much the greateſt difficulty; there are ſeveral conſiderations neceſſary to be taken in, in order to determine with any exactneſs, how far Godlineſs having the promiſe of the preſent Life, can be applied to *Them* in this mixt and diſorderly ſtate of things. And

1*ſt*; Religion and Piety does not generally alter the natural circumſtances, or the relative ſtates and conditions of Men. If a man be Poor, or be a Servant or Slave, his being pious and religious will not certainly make him rich, or gain him his Freedom. The diſtinctions of Mens Quality and Eſtates, are *not* always proportionable to their Virtue; nor did God ever deſign that Riches and Honour ſhould be the conſtant rewards of Religion, or a mean Fortune the Puniſhment of Sin. Theſe Differences of Circumſtances are the neceſſary reſult of the preſent eſtabliſhment of human Societies; and men ought not to expect that God ſhould generally interpoſe by his immediate power to alter theſe things, though indeed he ſeems *ſometimes* to do ſo by ſpecial providences. St. *Paul* tells *Servants*, (that is Slaves, in thoſe times;) *that they muſt not expect by receiving Chriſtianity to be releaſed from their Slavery*; 1 Cor. vii. 20. *Let every man*, ſays he, *abide in the ſame calling wherein he was called*; *Art thou called being a Servant?* i. e. a Slave? *care not for it*; *but if thou mayſt be made free, uſe it rather*: that is, if a man could obtain his freedom, he might lawfully deſire it; but if he could not, he ought not to look upon That as a Mark of the diſpleaſure of God. In like manner, if a man can in the practice of righteouſneſs and charity become rich, he *may* receive the bleſſing of God with thankfulneſs: but he ought by no means to expect, that this ſhould be the neceſſary conſequence of his being truly religious. When one of the *Scribes* came to our Saviour, and offered to follow him whitherſoever he went, expecting (as the circumſtances of the Hiſtory ſeem to imply,) that *when Jeſus was made King, his diſciples ſhould come to*

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great honour; our Lord rebuked him and told him he was in a great miſtake if he had any ſuch expectations; for the *foxes*, ſays he, *have holes, and the birds of the air have neſts, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head*; St. Matt. viii. 20. Thus Religion does not generally alter the natural circumſtances, or the relative States and Conditions of men: But then *this* it does, which is much more conſiderable; it teaches every man how to be content, and to make that ſtate, wherein God has placed him, eaſy and comfortable to himſelf. If it does not make a Servant free, yet it may give him that Greatneſs and Liberty of mind, which is a far greater bleſſing than bodily freedom; *He that is called in the Lord*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *being a Servant, is the Lord's freeman*; 1 *Cor.* vii. 22. In like manner, if Virtue and Diligence does not always enable a poor Man to become rich, yet it may give him a mind free from unreaſonable deſires, and from the want of riches; and This with the bleſſing of God, may make him much more happy even in the preſent life, than riches themſelves would do.

2*dly*; *Godlineſs* and true Holineſs does not exempt Men from the unavoidable caſualties of nature, ſuch as Sickneſs, Death, and the like. From *many* indeed of theſe Calamities, which often untimely ſurprize debauched Perſons, and are plainly the Conſequences of Intemperance, of their Sin and Folly; from Theſe a regular and virtuous courſe of life does in a great meaſure ſecure Men: But *ſome* of theſe things are by the neceſſity of our Nature and by the decree of God now made wholly unavoidable, and Death is equally inexorable both to the righteous and the wicked. But then *Godlineſs* teaches Men how to bear Sickneſs, and it teaches them alſo not to fear Death; but to look upon it only as a paſſage out of this ſinful world to a glorious immortality; and This without controverſy is the greateſt Happineſs, which a Man can poſſibly arrive at in the preſent Life.

3*dly*; Righteouſneſs and Piety do not exempt Men from ſuch afflictions, as God ſees neceſſary either to make trial of their Virtue, or to make an example of it. Some Virtues, ſuch as Patience and Reſignation, could hardly otherwiſe be exerciſed at all; and without queſtion the reward of Virtue, muſt not be ſuch as to prevent the making proof of it. *Job* was a very extraordinary good Man, and God was pleaſed to try him with extraordinary great afflictions; *and when he was tried he came forth as gold*, and became doubly a greater Man than if he had never been afflicted: But if he had never come out of his affliction at all, yet he had abundantly ſufficient wherewith to ſupport himſelf; and when he ſaw no hopes or appearance of relief, he could ſtill ſay: *Though God ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him, and I will maintain my own ways before him*; *He alſo ſhall be my ſalvation, for an hypocrite ſhall not come before him*; Job xiii. 15.

4*thly*; Religion and Virtue does not always ſecure men, from all the Conſequences of their *own* former Sins. From the *worſt* indeed of their Conſequences, from the violent terrors of Conſcience, and the eternal wrath of God, from Theſe it does indeed deliver them; But mens former Sins often ſow the ſeeds of future laſting calamities, and God is not obliged, when he pardons mens Sins, to remove all the natural ill conſequences of their Folly. *David*'s great Sin was pardoned upon his Confeſſing it, 2 *Sam.* xii. 13; *The Lord hath put away thy Sin, thou ſhalt not die*: Nevertheleſs the bad conſequences of that Sin followed him all the days of his Life, and his Penitential and other Pſalms are ſtanding teſtimonies of his affliction for it.

5*thly* and *Laſtly*; Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs does not ſecure men from the Conſequences of *other* mens Sins alſo; from Oppreſſion and unrighteous Judgment; from Fraud, from Violence and Perſecutions. If *all* men indeed were ſincerely Religious; they would all (as was before obſerved) be generally very happy in *this* Life, as well as in that which is to come; and this would ſufficiently make good the Apoſtle's aſſertion, that *Godlineſs hath the promiſe of the life that now is*: But Men by their Sins and Follies make themſelves miſerable, and *others* alſo; and good men who are not unhappy by their *own* Sins, may be made unhappy for a Seaſon, by the wickedneſs and perverſeneſs of *others*. This is what our Saviour warns us of, *that he who will be* his *diſciple, muſt take up his Croſs and follow him*, and the Apoſtle, *Acts* xiv. 22; *that we muſt through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God*. But then on the other hand we ought alſo to obſerve; that

that this Holineſs of Life, and ſuffering for the ſake of Virtue and True Religion, is accompanied with ſuch inward Peace and Satisfaction of Mind, ſuch Love and Aſſiſtance of all good Men, and ſuch a certain aſſurance of the Favour of God, as our Saviour himſelf pronounces to be an hundred-fold greater, *even in this preſent life*, than all the Loſſes and Afflictions we can ſuſtain.

The Sum of what has been ſaid, is this. Though *Godlineſs* hath the promiſe of the preſent life, and the natural probability of things to make men happy in it, yet good men are liable to very many and very great afflictions: But then wicked men are alſo ſubject to all the ſame afflictions through their own Sins, and to much greater calamities through the righteous judgment of God; and good men are free from many calamities, which bad men bring upon themſelves by Intemperance and Quarrels, and innumerable other Vices and Follies: And thoſe Calamities which good Men do *not* eſcape, they are infinitely better able to bear, than wicked men are: For *the Spirit of a man*, eſpecially when ſupported by the aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God, *will ſuſtain his infirmity; but a wounded Spirit who can bear?* Prov. xviii. 14. To all the Sufferings of the wicked there is added this one intolerable circumſtance, that they have no comfort wherewith to ſupport their Spirits, either from themſelves or from without: They ſtand condemned by the judgment of their own conſcience; and they either know that God himſelf alſo condemns them, or (which is not much better) they are forced to reſt only upon the vain hopes, the weak and groundleſs ſuſpicions of Infidelity. But good men, though they do fall into great afflictions are yet ſupported by the *Strength of Virtue*, by the *Confidence of a good Conſcience*, by the *Love and Aſſiſtance of all unprejudiced men*, and (which is more than all) by the *Aſſurance of God's Favour*, who will certainly either deliver them in the *preſent* life, or reward them in the *future*. For *Godlineſs* hath the promiſe not only of *this* life, but of *that alſo which is to come*.

SERMON

SERMON LXXI.

Perſeverance in Religion the only Title to the Reward of it.

REV. ii. 7, latter part.

To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midſt of the paradiſe of God.

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THE ſecond and third chapters of this book of the *Revelation*, contain certain Admonitions in form of Epiſtles, ſent from our Saviour by the Apoſtle St. *John* to the Angels or Biſhops of the Seven Churches of *Aſia*. In theſe Epiſtles our Saviour either commends their Virtue and exhorts to Perſeverance; or reproves their Failings and exhorts them to Repent; and each of the ſeven Epiſtles he concludes with a Promiſe of great and eternal Happineſs, to him that ſhall *overcome*. The Text is part of the Epiſtle to the Angel of the Church of *Epheſus*; which begins with a commendation of his patience, ver. 2; *I know thy works, and thy labour and thy patience, and how thou canſt not bear them which are evil, and thou haſt tried them which ſay they are Apoſtles and are not, and haſt found them liars; And haſt born, and haſt patience, and for my name's ſake haſt laboured and haſt not fainted:* Then follows a kind and affectionate reproof for his beginning

beginning to remit of his firſt zeal, with an exhortation to repent, ver. 4; *Nevertheleſs I have ſomewhat againſt thee, becauſe thou haſt left thy firſt love; Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the firſt works:* And then he concludes in the words of the Text; *To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the Tree of life, which is in the midſt of the paradiſe of God. I will give him to eat of the tree of life*; i.e. I will give him immortality and eternal life. It ſeems to be an alluſion to the deſcription of paradiſe in which our firſt parents were placed; Gen. ii. 8; *The Lord God planted a garden eaſtward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed; and out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleaſant to the ſight and good for food, the tree of* life *alſo in the midſt of the garden.* That is; To all the Proviſions of happineſs, which God had made for man; This was ſuperadded as the crown of all, that there was a poſſibility of his ſecuring it to himſelf for ever. This is what was emblematically repreſented by the tree of life. Now as it is *there* related, that our firſt parents, by reaſon of their being overcome and conquered by Sin, were driven out of Paradiſe; and thenceforth excluded from the way of the Tree of life, leſt they ſhould eat thereof and live for ever; So *here* our Saviour promiſes on the contrary, that he that overcomes and conquers Sin, ſhall be reſtored to the Hopes from whence our firſt Parents fell, and be again admitted to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midſt of the Paradiſe of God. As by Sin againſt the *firſt* of God's Commandments, the hopes of Immortality and eternal Life were forfeited; So by Obedience to the Goſpel of Chriſt, which is the *laſt* revelation of his Will, Immortality and eternal Life ſhall be regained.

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To *him that overcomes*; i.e. to him who, notwithſtanding all the temptations of a ſinful and corrupt world, yet patiently perſeveres in the Faith of Chriſt and in Obedience to his commands. The life of a Chriſtian, is in Scripture frequently compared to a Warfare; and very many places, without expreſſing the ſimilitude at large, do yet directly refer and allude to it. *Fight the good* fight *of Faith*, ſaith St. *Paul*, 1 Tim. vi. 12; and *I have fought a good* fight, *I have finiſhed my courſe*, 2 Tim. iv. 7; with many other the like paſſages. The thing propoſed, for which a Chriſtian contends; is Happineſs and Life eternal. The *Enemies* which are repreſented as oppoſing him, and which would hinder him from attaining that Happineſs, are the Temptations of the World, the Fleſh, and the Devil. If, notwithſtanding the Force of all theſe Temptations, he perſeveres in his Faith and his Obedience, he is ſaid in Scripture to *Overcome*; if by any of theſe he be prevailed upon to forſake his duty, and to commit Sin, he *is* Overcome by them. And unleſs he renews his diligence, and by a more vigorous reſolution conquers thoſe temptations which before conquered *him*, he muſt loſe his reward. The great temptation with which the *Primitive* Chriſtians were aſſaulted, was *Perſecution*; by which they were tempted to deny the Truth, and to renounce that holy Religion which they had once embraced, to renounce it by returning again to the idolatrous worſhip of the heathen Gods. This was *Their* particular conflict and trial; And He that in that great trial reſiſted unto blood, chooſing rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of Sin for a ſeaſon; was ſaid in a peculiar and more emphatical ſenſe to have *Overcome*. And to *thoſe* perſons we muſt underſtand theſe promiſes of our Saviour, to be *principally* and more *immediately* made; *He that overcometh ſhall inherit all things*; Rev. xxi. 7: And, *To him that overcometh, will I grant to ſit with me in* my *throne, even as I alſo overcame, and am ſet down with my Father in* his *throne*; ch. iii. ver. 21. Theſe promiſes, I ſay, we muſt underſtand to be primarily and moſt immediately directed to thoſe primitive diſciples, who, in that great trial of Perſecution, ſhould hold out unto the end, and be ſlain for the word of God and for the Teſtimony of Jeſus. But that they proportionably belong to all *other* Chriſtians alſo, who in the midſt of any *other* temptations ſhould maintain their integrity, and perſevere in the practice of Virtue unto the end; is plain both from the Tenour of the Scripture, which ſometimes explains this term *Overcoming* by the equivalent expreſſion of *keeping the works of Chriſt unto the end*, as *Rev.* ii. 26; and it is alſo evident from the Nature of the thing itſelf: For the Promiſe is not made to him that overcometh, for That reaſon becauſe it is *this* or *that particular* tempta-

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tion that he overcomes, but becauſe he maintains his virtue and integrity to the end, notwithſtanding the force of any temptation to the contrary. The full meaning therefore of the words, is briefly this: He that having embraced the Goſpel of Chriſt, and being firmly perſwaded of the Truth of his religion, ſhall continue ſtedfaſt in this Faith and in the Obedience thereof, notwithſtanding all the threatnings of Perſecution on the one hand, and the temptations of the Pleaſures of Sin on the other; ſhall as a conqueror receive the Crown of eternal Life, and have an entrance miniſtred to him abundantly into the everlaſting kingdom of God. *To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midſt of the Paradiſe of God.*

From the words thus explained, I ſhall endeavour 1*ſt*, to ſhow, that all the Promiſes in the *New Teſtament*, are made only to thoſe, who ſhall perſevere in well-doing unto the end: *To him that overcometh.* And 2*dly*, I ſhall apply this to *ourſelves*, by conſidering diſtinctly *what* it is, that in our *preſent* circumſtances may be ſtiled Perſeverance.

I. *Firſt*; All the Promiſes in the *New Teſtament*, are made only to thoſe, who ſhall perſevere to the End. The Chriſtian life is a ſpiritual Warfare, wherein we muſt *fight againſt* the Temptations of a *preſent* ſinful and corrupt world, for the Glory and Happineſs that ſhall be revealed *hereafter*. And the reward is promiſed, not to him that ſhall fight, but to him that ſhall overcome. Our Saviour plainly warns us, that no man putting his hand to the plow, and looking back, is meet for the Kingdom of God; and not only *authorizes*, but *commands* us to apply to this purpoſe the Example of *Lot*'s Wife. And God by the Prophet declares, and repeats it by the Apoſtle, that if any man draws back, his ſoul ſhall have no pleaſure in him. We are told in Scripture, *that many ſhould embrace the doctrine of Chriſt, and receive his word even with joy; but becauſe in time of temptation they would fall away, having loved the corruptions of this preſent world, it ſhould profit them nothing to have once been believers*; ſeeing *the cares of this world, and the deceitfulneſs of riches*, and the luſts of other things, have, as our Saviour expreſſes it, *choaked the word, and made it become unfruitful.* In which caſe, it cannot be but they muſt loſe their reward: For, *He that endureth to the* end, ſaith our Saviour, *the ſame ſhall be ſaved*; St. Matt. xxiv. 13. Not *every one that ſaith unto* him, *Lord, Lord*; *not* every one that embraces his religion, and makes profeſſion of it; Nay, *not* every one that receiveth his word with gladneſs, and obeys it for a time even with ſome degree perhaps of Sincerity; but he that *with patience and conſtancy* maintains his reſolutions, and notwithſtanding the numerous temptations of a ſinful world, preſerves his integrity to the end; *he* only has a certain title to inherit the Promiſe; *he who by patient* continuance *in well-doing*, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *ſeeks for glory, and honour, and immortality*, Rom. ii. 7; and *holds the* beginning *of his confidence* ſtedfaſt *unto the end*; Heb. iii. 14. For otherwiſe, if, after good beginnings, men fall away again into a ſtate of Sin, the having formerly been partakers of the Grace of God, and having taſted of the heavenly gift; inſtead of being any advantage to them, will on the contrary only enlarge their Guilt, and encreaſe their Condemnation. If after they have eſcaped the pollutions of the world through the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, they be again entangled therein and overcome; the latter end is worſe with them than the beginning: *And it had been better for them, not to have known the way of righteouſneſs at all, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them*; 2 Pet. ii. 20. For as, *when a wicked man turns away from all his Sins which he has committed, and does for the future that which is lawful and right*, all his paſt Wickedneſs ſhall not be *mentioned* unto him in Judgment: So on the contrary, *when a righteous man turneth away from his righteouſneſs, and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth*; there is the very ſame reaſon, that then all *his righteouſneſs* ſhould be forgotten and *not mentioned* unto him, unleſs it be to increaſe his Condemnation, and to convince him that his Wickedneſs is the more inexcuſable, by having been, againſt clearer knowledge, the more deliberate and wilful. This whole Life is a ſtate of Trial and Probation; and however we may have begun well, yet if we leave off before our work be done, and ſuffer ourſelves by the

the ill example of a corrupt world, to be ſeduced out of the paths of Virtue, we are beguiled of our reward. *They that run in a race*, ſays the Apoſtle, *run all; but it is not they that run, but they that* continue *to run without fainting to the end, that ſhall obtain the prize.* Men are very apt to deceive themſelves in this matter, by imagining that ſome zealous warmths of devotion, and the ſetting apart ſome *particular ſeaſons* for religious *Acts*, inſtead of the *habitual* courſe of a virtuous life, will be looked upon as a running the Chriſtian race. But let them not ſuffer themſelves to be ſo deluded. If this can be ſtiled *running*, yet it is not ſo as to obtain: If it can at all be ſtiled *fighting*, yet it is *not ſo as to conquer, but to be overcome.* Our Saviour has warned us to *watch*, (that is, to follow righteouſneſs in the whole *courſe* of our lives,) and to be ready *always; to have our loins girded about, and our lights burning, and to be like men that wait for their Lord when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh they may open unto him immediately*; Luk. xii. 35. And again, Take heed *to your ſelves, leſt at* any *time your hearts be overcharged with ſurfeiting and drunkenneſs and the cares of this life, and ſo that day come upon you unawares; For as a ſnare ſhall it come on all them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore and pray* always, *that ye may be accounted worthy to eſcape all theſe things that ſhall come to paſs, and to ſtand before the Son of man*; St. Luk. xxi. 34. The Apoſtles alſo in their Epiſtles are perpetually warning us, to *watch*, and to *take heed, leſt* at *any* time *we fail of the grace of God; leſt any root of bitterneſs ſpringing up trouble us, and thereby we be defiled.* 'Tis not therefore a few faint and fruitleſs reſolutions (concerning which our Saviour forewarns us, that *many ſhall* ſo ſeek *to enter in, and ſhall not be able*;) but it is only a *conſtant and patient perſevering* in well-doing to the End, to which all the Promiſes in the *New Teſtament* are made.

II. We are now in the *Second* place, to apply this to our ſelves; by conſidering diſtinctly *what* it is, that in our *preſent* circumſtances may be ſtiled Perſeverance. And this in brief *is, our* continuing as ſtedfaſtly to reſiſt the temptations of *Vice*, as the Primitive Chriſtians reſiſted the temptations to *Apoſtacy*, and *overcame* in the great trial of *Perſecution.* When a man is in that ſtate deſcribed by St. *Paul* in the vii*th* chapter of his Epiſtle to the *Romans*, that he is convinced of the evil of great and known Sins, and ſets his mind to reſiſt and ſtrive againſt them; yet, through the viciouſneſs of his inclination or the Force of evil habits, he frequently relapſes and is entangled in them again; it is a ſign indeed that ſuch a one is not yet *hardned* through the deceitfulneſs of Sin; there is great hopes, that through the grace of God he may at length prevail and overcome his temptations; but he has not yet actually overcome; nor can he be ſaid to have done ſo, till he has brought himſelf into ſuch a ſtate, as that he has clearly prevailed over his uſual temptations to known Sins, and has attained a reaſonable and well-grounded aſſurance, that, through the grace of God, he ſhall not, at leaſt habitually, fall into them any more. The Notion which the Scripture gives us of *Baptiſm*, that is, in thoſe who at riper years were converted to Chriſt's Religion; is, that it ſhould be an obligation upon them, abſolutely to forſake all their paſt Sins, and to walk from thenceforward in all Holineſs and godly Converſation. Thus St. *Paul* himſelf argues, Rom. vi. 3; *Know ye not, that ſo many of us as were baptized into Jeſus Chriſt, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptiſm into death; that, like as Chriſt was raiſed up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even ſo we alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of life; Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of Sin might be deſtroyed, that henceforth we ſhould not ſerve Sin.* And ver. 9; *Knowing that Chriſt being raiſed from the dead dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him; Likewiſe reckon* ye *alſo your ſelves to be dead indeed unto Sin, but alive unto God through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord; Let not Sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye ſhould obey it in the luſts thereof.* The intent of which Argument is plainly this: That when they deſcended

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deſcended into the water and aroſe out of it again, (which was the ancient and moſt ſignificant manner of baptizing,) they made publick profeſſion, that as they hoped for pardon of their paſt Sins through the merits of the Death of Chriſt, ſo they themſelves would thenceforth *die unto Sin*, that is, utterly and for ever caſt off and forſake all their former Debaucheries and unrighteous Practices whatſoever; and for the future riſe again to walk with Chriſt, *in newneſs and holineſs of life*. Thoſe who *did* walk ſuitably to this holy profeſſion, were ſaid *to be Waſhed, to be Sanctified, to be Juſtified, in the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and by the Spirit of our God*. And they who ſo *continued* to live ſuitably *to the End*, were ſaid to *Perſevere*. And of ſuch *only*, was it ſaid that they *Perſevered*; in oppoſition to thoſe, who after their Baptiſm, lapſed into any great and notorious tranſgreſſion. Hence in the book of the *Revelation*, according to the figurative manner of expreſſion in prophetick writings, Baptized Perſons are repreſented as having *waſhed their robes and made them white in the* blood *of the lamb*. And of ſuch as Perſevered from That time, our Saviour ſeems accordingly to ſpeak, ch. iii. 4; *Thou haſt a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments, and they ſhall walk with me in white; for they are worthy*. Some indeed carried this Severity too far: But how can *we*, who live in theſe corrupter Ages of the world, and are fallen into the *contrary* extreme, how can *we* think upon theſe things, without ſhame and confuſion of faces; who, not only after having ſolemnly taken upon our ſelves the profeſſion of Religion, but after frequent purpoſes and promiſes of reformation, after repeated vows and reſolutions of amendment, do *yet* often continue in Sin and defer our Repentance. 'Tis true, there is no man who pretends to be a Chriſtian, but deſigns to Repent at Some time or other; and our Saviour *has* indeed in his Goſpel made the ſame promiſes to Repentance, that he has to Innocence and continued Obedience. But let us not here deceive our ſelves by a fundamental Error. The Repentance to which our Saviour has made ſuch large promiſes, is not the *late* Repentance or ineffective Remorſe of a dying *Chriſtian*, but the *timely* Repentance of a Sinner at his converſion to Chriſtianity; and generally in the *New Teſtament* it means the *very ſame* thing, as Baptiſm it ſelf; which is therefore ſometimes for that very reaſon ſtiled in Scripture the *Baptiſm of Repentance*. Indeed if a Chriſtian, by an unhappy education, be brought up in Ignorance and Wickedneſs; whenever he comes, by the power of God's Word, and the influence of his Holy Spirit, to be convinced of the evil of his ways, and of the neceſſity of Virtue and true Religion; he is then in the ſame ſtate that a Heathen Convert is ſuppoſed to be at his Baptiſm, and the ſame Promiſes are made to them both. But when a Chriſtian, who has a clear knowledge of his duty, does notwithſtanding *That*, continue wilfully all his life in Sin and Debauchery; our Saviour is ſo far from aſſuring him that God and Angels will rejoice at his Converſion, if when he grows old he leaves off Sinning (or rather ſeems to do ſo,) becauſe he can Sin no more; that he has no where promiſed that ſuch a Repentance ſhall with any certainty be accepted at *all*. *That* which is abſolutely required of us, and which is the *leaſt* that can poſſibly be meant by Perſeverance, is; that, if we *have not* been ſo happy, as to have always eſcaped the great corruptions of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; yet that at leaſt by a *timely* Repentance we ſo effectually forſake them, as to return to them no more, but continue for the future in the conſtant and habitual practice of the contrary Virtues; Having always before our eyes thoſe admonitions of the Apoſtles; *Little children, let no man deceive you; He only that doth righteouſneſs, is righteous*; 1 Joh. iii. 7. And 1 Cor. vi. 9; *Know ye not that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, ſhall inherit the kingdom of God*. And again, Gal. v. 19; *The works of the fleſh are manifeſt, which are theſe; adultery, fornication,*

nication, uncleanneſs, laſciviouſneſs, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, ſtrife, ſeditions, hereſies, envyings, murders, drunkenneſs, revellings, and ſuch like; of the which I tell you before, as I have alſo told you in times paſt, that they which do ſuch things, ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God.

It remains, that I draw only a briet Inference or two from what has been ſaid, and ſo conclude. And

1*ſt*; Thoſe who have been ſo happy as hitherto to have eſcaped the great Corruptions of the world, let them conſider what an unſpeakable advantage they have in their hands, and let them be zealous that no man take their crown. Let them conſider that *That* time, which a dying Sinner would give all the world to recover, is now in their hands, and they may make an ineſtimable uſe of it. Let them conſider, that if they patiently continue to maintain their innocence and their good works for a few Years, they will ſoon be paſt the greateſt dangers of Temptation; they will eſcape the bitter pangs of Remorſe and Repentance; they will be *above* that greateſt of human miſeries, the dread and horror of death; and may, not only without fear, but even with joy expect the appearance of our Lord *at his ſecond coming*; who has promiſed, that *to him who thus* overcometh, *he will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midſt of the paradiſe of God.* Again; *He that* overcometh, *ſhall not be hurt of the ſecond death*; ver. 11, of this chapter. *He that* overcometh, *and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, even as I received of my Father*; ver. 26. *He that* overcometh, *the ſame ſhall be cloathed in white raiment, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but I will confeſs his name before my Father, and before his Angels*; ch. iii. ver. 5. *Him that* overcometh, *will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he ſhall go no more out, and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jeruſalem*; ver. 12. And, *To him that* overcometh *will I grant to ſit with me in* my *throne, even as I alſo overcame and am ſet down with my Father in* his *throne*; ver. 21.

2*dly*; Thoſe who, on the other hand, have lived hitherto in a courſe of Wickedneſs and Debauchery, and are ſtill under the bondage and ſlavery of Sin; the only advice that can be given to *them*, is to warn them of their approaching danger, and to exhort them earneſtly, to flee from the wrath to come. They are (in the expreſſion of St. *Jude*) *as firebrands in the fire, ready to be conſumed.* They are under the ſentence of the wrath of God, and liable to all the curſes that are written in his book. They are upon the brink of eternal death, and ready to be ſwallowed up in endleſs deſtruction. Their profeſſing the Name of Chriſt, will do them no ſervice; their continuing in the communion of his Church, will avail them nothing. There is but one remedy, which is by a thorough Repentance to purify themſelves immediately *from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, and to perfect holineſs in the fear of God.* Otherwiſe, without ſuch an actual and timely amendment, there is *no* juſt ground to hope, that a death-bed Sorrow ſhall be *accepted unto Salvation.* The Penitent thief indeed was received by our Saviour, as any other Infidel and ignorant perſon may be, who in the latter part of his life has the firſt opportunity of being convinced of the Truth of Chriſt's holy Religion, and ſincerely embraces it; but I do not remember *any* place in Scripture, where it is promiſed that the vain Sorrow of a Chriſtian, who has ſpent all his life in Debauchery and Unrighteouſneſs, ſhall be accepted at the hour of death. The labourers who were hired into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, received indeed the ſame wages with them that had born the burden and heat of the day: But our Saviour has no where promiſed, that Chriſtians who have all along enjoyed the Light of the Goſpel, and are hired into the vineyard in the morning, if *they* riot away all the day in Wickedneſs and Debauchery, ſhall at night be accepted for their profeſſing their ſorrow that they have not worked. Let All therefore, who

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have yet the time before them, conſider what they have to do; let them be zealous to improve that time and thoſe talents wherewith God has bleſſed them, that when their maſter cometh he may find them ſo doing, and bid them, as having been good and faithful ſervants, *to enter into the joy of their Lord.*

And *may the Grace of God, which is able to raiſe even the dead to life, enable them to finiſh this their great work, before the things that belong to their peace, be hid from their eyes.*

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SERMON LXXII.

Different Degrees of Sinners differently to be treated.

JUDE 22, and part of 23.

And of ſome have Compaſſion, making a difference; And others ſave with Fear, pulling them out of the Fire.

THERE is nothing of greater difficulty in the Explication of Scripture, than the applying to Perſons of different *Tempers* and *Diſpoſitions*, of different *Capacities* and *Qualifications*, thoſe *Portions* of Holy Writ, thoſe Divine *Promiſes* or *Threatnings*, thoſe *Comforts* or *Terrors* of the Lord, which *properly* belong to them, and are *fitly* ſuited to their peculiar Circumſtances. There is nothing more difficult, than to hinder them from perverting their own *Underſtandings*, and miſguiding their *Actions* by applying to *themſelves* what does by no means belong to *Them*, or to *any* perſons in their Circumſtances, but often to ſuch as are in a quite contrary condition; and ſo *wreſting the Scriptures*, as St. *Peter* expreſſes it, *to their own deſtruction*. All *Scripture is indeed given by inſpiration of God; and is profitable for Doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in Righteouſneſs;* SERM. LXXII.

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neſs; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furniſhed unto all good Works: But in order to this effect, it is neceſſary that the *Word of Truth be rightly divided*, as St. *Paul* directs, 2 *Tim.* ii. 15; i. e. that proper Application be made of the different *parts* of it, according to the different *Circumſtances* of different *Perſons*. By *one* Method, the *ignorant* are to be *inſtructed*; by another the *wicked* and *profane*, to be *reproved*: By *one* part of Scripture, the *Weak* are to be *confirmed*; by *another*, the *Melancholy* to be *comforted*; by a *third*, the *Erroneous* to be *undeceived*. There is *one* kind of Arguments neceſſary to be uſed, to men of *evil Principles* and *debauched Lives*; to Lovers of Pleaſure, and Haters of Diſcipline and wiſe Inſtruction; to men puffed up with accidental advantages of this preſent World, and that have never taſted the Powers of the World to come; and *another* ſort proper to be applied to thoſe, who *know* the *Will* of God, *and approve the things that are more excellent*, and *delight in the Law of God after the inward man*, being convinced that the *Law is Holy, and the Commandment Holy and juſt and good*; but through the *Strength* of their *Paſſions* and the *Weakneſs* of their Reſolutions, they are frequently ſeduced by the Deceitfulneſs of Sin, and find *another Law in their Members warring againſt the Law of their Mind, and bringing them into Captivity to the Law of Sin and Death*. There are *ſome*, that ought to be *rebuked ſharply*, Tit. i. 13; and *others* whom when they are *overtaken in a Fault*, they *which are ſpiritual* are directed to *reſtore* them *in the Spirit of Meekneſs, conſidering* themſelves *leſt* they *alſo be tempted*; Gal. vi. 1. *One* Man, our Saviour directs, that you ſhould *tell him of his Fault between him and thee*; and that *another* you ſhould look upon *as a Heathen man and a Publican*; not to *keep company with ſuch a man, no, not to eat. Some* Perſons the Apoſtle ſpeaks of *delivering over unto* Satan, *that they may learn not to blaſpheme*; and *for the deſtruction of the Fleſh, that the Spirit may be ſaved in the Day of the Lord Jeſus*; In like manner, as *deſperate Diſeaſes* of the *Body*, uſe to have applied to them the ſharpeſt and moſt dangerous remedies: Concerning *others* we are directed, not to *break the bruiſed reed, nor*

2 Theſſ. iii. 15.

quench the ſmoaking Flax; not to count them as enemies, but to admoniſh them as brethren; to *lift up the hands which hang down, and to* ſtrengthen the *feeble knees, — leſt that which is lame be turned out of the way, but* that *it rather be healed*; Heb. xii. 13. There *are* Sins, of Weakneſs and daily Incurſion; ſurprizes, negligences and inadvertencies; treſpaſſes, which our Saviour encourages us to hope ſhall *daily* be forgiven, even as we *daily* offer up our prayers to God, and *daily* forgive each other our mutual treſpaſſes: There are *other* Offences of ſuch preſumptuous Malignity, ſo totally deſtructive of the Chriſtian Life, ſo entirely oppoſite to the whole Spirit of the Goſpel, and carrying along with them ſo little hope of being ever amended; that the Apoſtle St. *John* ſeems *hardly* to *dare* encourage us, to hope or pray for their forgiveneſs at all; And our Saviour, who knew what was in man, and how impoſſible it was for *ſome particular* perſons, who rejected the Goſpel with a high hand and with preſumptuous contempt, to be ever brought to Repentance; declares peremptorily that *their* Sin ſhould *not be forgiven* them, *neither in this World, neither in the World to come*. The Apoſtle St. *Paul*, 1 *Tim.* v. 24, 25; thus diſtinguiſhes the different kinds of Sinners; *Some mens* Sins, ſays he, *are open before-hand, going before to judgment, and others they follow after*: *Likewiſe alſo the* good Works *of ſome, are manifeſt before-hand; and they that are otherwiſe, cannot be hid: Some mens Sins are open before-hand*; i. e. as he elſewhere expreſſes it, *The Works of the Fleſh are* manifeſt; they are notorious even to the Eye of the World; they are ſuch as cannot be concealed, but may without Scruple be condemned beforehand, going before unto judgment with a viſible and indiſputable Sentence of Condemnation: *And others they follow after*; i. e. the Sins of *others*, are ſecret at preſent and undiſcovered to the World; but will appear againſt them in judgment, at the Day when the Thoughts of all Hearts ſhall be diſcloſed. *Likewiſe alſo the* good Works *of ſome*, are *manifeſt before-hand; and they that are otherwiſe, cannot be hid; they that are otherwiſe*, i. e. thoſe *good*

Works

Works that Now are not manifeſt, yet ſhall not always be hid. Moſt Expoſitors underſtand this latter verſe otherwiſe, as if the Apoſtle had ſaid; *The* good *Works of ſome, are manifeſt before-hand; and they that are otherwiſe*, i. e. thoſe Works that are *not good*, likewiſe *cannot be hid*. But this being a repetition of the very ſame thing that was expreſſed in the fore-going verſe; the Antitheſis or Oppoſition between the two Parts of the Sentence, is much better preſerved in that Explication I now mentioned: *Some mens* Sins *are open before-hand, going before unto judgment, and others they follow after; Likewiſe alſo the* good Works *of ſome, are manifeſt before-hand; and thoſe that are otherwiſe*, thoſe good Works that Now are not manifeſt, yet *ſhall not always be hid*. But to proceed: There *are* Perſons, whoſe hearts are as *hard* as the *nether Milſtone*; whoſe Conſciences are inſenſible, and, in the Apoſtle's phraſe, *ſeared as it were with a hot Iron*; on whom the Terrors of the Lord make no impreſſion, no, not when repreſented under the affrighting ſimilitude, of the *Mountain that burned with Fire, and of the Blackneſs and Darkneſs and Tempeſt*; Heb. xii. 18: Of which ſort of men, there is a moſt elegant deſcription, in *Rev.* xvi. 9; *And men were ſcorched with great Heat, and blaſphemed the Name of God which has power over theſe plagues, and repented not to give him glory*; but *gnawed their tongues for pain, and blaſphemed the God of Heaven becauſe of their pains, and yet repented not of their deeds*: This is a lively deſcription indeed, of hardned Sinners: There are *Others*, whoſe Hearts are tender and melancholy; apprehenſive, beyond meaſure and without reaſon; diſconſolate, and apt to *fear even where no fear is*. *Some*, with great Preſumption, and without any juſt ground, apply to *themſelves* all the Promiſes made in Scripture to the *Beſt of Men*, or even to the *univerſal Church itſelf*; and *Others* as unreaſonably, without being conſcious of any great Wickedneſs, yet in a deſponding manner take to themſelves all the Threatnings denounced in Scripture againſt the *greateſt* of Sinners, againſt even the *Haters* and *Deſpiſers* of all Religion. Among this Multitude and Variety of different and even contrary Tempers and Diſpoſitions of Men; *rightly to divide the Word of Truth*; and *ſo* to ſet forth the infinite Mercy and Goodneſs of God declared in the Goſpel towards repenting Sinners, as that the confident and preſumptuous may not thence be able to take any occaſion of being negligent in *working out their own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*; and at the ſame time *ſo* to repreſent the ſeverity of the divine Threatnings againſt Sin, that melancholy pious Perſons may not thereby be driven into unreaſonable Deſpondency; this is a matter of very great Difficulty, and *who is ſufficient for theſe things?* There can be no better Direction given us in this Matter, than what we find in the Words of the Text: *Of ſome have compaſſion, making a difference; and others ſave with Fear, pulling them out of the Fire*; i. e. according to the different Tempers and Circumſtances of Men, according to the different degrees of their Sin and Danger; ſo let them either be *invited* with Tenderneſs and Compaſſion, or *terrified* with the ſeverity of the divine Vengeance, into the Practice of their Duty. For ſo God Almighty himſelf in the Diſpenſations of his All-wiſe Providence, *draws* ſome Men with the tender Mercies of a compaſſionate Father; and others he *drives* with the Terrors of an incenſed Judge.

In the Words, we cannot but obſerve; 1*ſt*, that there is great *Difference* in the *degrees* of Sin, and in the *Danger* of Sinners; and that accordingly there ought to be a proportionable difference, in the *manner* of treating them: *Making a Difference*. 2*dly*, That the Difference which ought to be made in this caſe, is This; that thoſe who ſin through *infirmity*, are to be admoniſhed with greater tenderneſs and gentleneſs, than thoſe who ſin preſumptuouſly: *Of ſome, have Compaſſion*. 3*dly*, That wilful and preſumptuous Sinners, Sinners who tranſgreſs *habitually* and *with a high hand*, are to be looked upon as being in a condition near to deſperate, as being *already* in *the Fire*, out of which when there is great Reaſon to *Fear* leſt perhaps they cannot be *pulled out* ſoon enough, before they be conſumed: *Others ſave with Fear, pulling them out of the Fire*. 4*thly* and *laſtly*, that even *theſe* Perſons we ought ſtill to endeavour to ſave, by bringing them even *yet*, if poſſible, to Repentance; *Save*

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them, though *with Fear*; ſave them, though it be *out of the Fire*. The Reſcue of ſuch Perſons out of their extreme danger, St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* iii. 15, elegantly deſcribes by the like ſimilitude; repreſenting them as being *ſaved, yet ſo as by* or *from Fire*; ſo as *out of* or *thro'* the Flames: in ſuch manner as a Perſon eſcapes or is delivered out of the Burning, when his Houſe is on all ſides on Fire round about him. Thoſe of the Church of *Rome*, have from that paſſage ridiculouſly attempted to deduce the Doctrine of *Purgatory*; But the plain meaning of St. *Paul* is, to expreſs the great Danger of thoſe, who, upon the Foundation of Chriſt, build *vain and unneceſſary Doctrines* of their own. And St. *Jude* in the Text borrows the ſame Phraſe, to ſignify the extreme Difficulty of reducing ſuch Perſons into a State of Salvation, who, upon the ſame Foundation, diſhonour their Profeſſion by *a vicious courſe of Life*. And indeed, if there be *any* difference, the Phraſe is even *more* emphatically applicable to the Perſons St. *Jude* ſpeaks of, than to thoſe mentioned by St. *Paul*. For if he who upon the Foundation of Chriſt, builds the *hay and ſtubble* of unneceſſary *doctrines*, ſhall himſelf with difficulty be ſaved when his Work is on Fire; how much leſs ſhall *He* eſcape, who by a vicious *Life* on the ſame Foundation builds up *Pitch and Brimſtone*, as a treaſure againſt the day when the Wrath of God ſhall be revealed by Fire?

The Words being thus explained, and clearly diſtinguiſhing Sinners into *two* Sorts; ſuch as are to be treated with all *Compaſſion*, and others that are to be reproved with the utmoſt *Severity*: we may reaſonably conclude that the *Firſt* ſort, the perſons to be treated with all *Gentleneſs and Compaſſion*, are ſuch as ſin for *want of knowledge and due conſideration*; ſuch of whom our *Saviour* affirms that they *ſhall be beaten with few ſtripes*; and whom *We* therefore ought to inſtruct in meekneſs, and reprove with all poſſible Tenderneſs: *Beginners in Sin*; as Perſons not yet of ripe years; ſeduced into the borders of Unrighteouſneſs, through Simplicity, and without Malicious intention; Sinners by ill Example, and through the *Prejudices* of the firſt Principles of an *ill education*; Sinners in *ſingle* inſtances, and matters of *ſmaller* importance; in caſes of ſudden *ſurprize*, and with *unfrequent* returns: Theſe are the perſons to be treated with the gentle admonitions of compaſſion. Under the *Second* ſort; thoſe that are to be reproved with the utmoſt *Severity*; we may conceive the Apoſtle deſigned to comprehend, ſuch as are guilty of particular *great and crying* Tranſgreſſions; as *Simon Magus*, whom we find St. *Peter* thus reproving; *Repent of thy Wickedneſs, and pray God*, if perhaps *the thought of thine Heart may be forgiven thee*; Alſo all habitual Sinners in *any* kind; whom the Scripture always repreſents as extremely difficult to be recovered; And above all, *Mockers and Scorners* at Religion; whoſe caſe is always ſpoken of in the Holy Writ, as little leſs than deſperate.

But, to make a ſtill *more particular* application to the different Kinds and Degrees of Sinners hinted at in the Text, we may diſtinguiſh as follows.

Firſt; Some men there are, who for want of early inſtruction and good education, are ſo utterly ignorant of all religious matters, that, excepting the bare Name, they hardly know whether there *be* any ſuch thing as Religion at all: They are wholly ignorant of the great Motives and Principles of Religion; and, for want of attending with due conſideration to the dictates of natural conſcience, they have very little Senſe of the eternal and fundamental obligation of the moral and immutable reaſon of things. Such perſons as theſe, want the very foundation and firſt *principles* of the Doctrine of Chriſt, to be laid for them from the beginning: And their want of education can be ſupplied only, by the repetition of wiſe and wholſome inſtruction. The Doctrines of Religion muſt be inſtilled into theſe perſons by degrees, and inculcated upon them with continual induſtry. Precept muſt be given upon precept, and line upon line. Prejudices muſt be removed, falſe apprehenſions rectified, the danger of wilful ignorance and careleſsneſs in the great matters of Religion affectionately diſcovered. The Motives of Religion muſt be ſtrongly enforced, the exceeding great rewards of virtue clearly and diſtinctly repreſented, and the Terrors of the Lord earneſtly urged and preſſed upon them.

Secondly;

Secondly; Others there are, who, not like the former, out of mere ignorance and ſtupidity, but on the contrary, through an affectation of wit and gallantry, deny all moral difference of Actions, and take upon them by an extraordinary degree of reaſon and judgment to have gotten *above* the Fears and Obligations of Religion. Theſe are the men of the moſt openly corrupt Principles and debauched Lives; Lovers of Pleaſure, and Haters of all ſerious and wiſe inſtruction; puffed up with accidental Advantages of this preſent World; deſpiſers of true Knowledge, and that cannot bear Reproof. To ſuch perſons as theſe, whenever they can be prevailed with to hearken to That Reaſon which they would be thought to be maſters of, we muſt demonſtrate from the neceſſary notion of a firſt or ſelf-exiſtent Cauſe, and from the ſtructure and order of the world, that there *is* a Supreme God, who made and governs all things; and from the neceſſary Attributes of ſuch a ſupreme and ſelf-exiſtent Cauſe, we muſt prove that God, as he is All-powerful and All-wiſe, ſo he is alſo perfectly Holy, Juſt and Good; and from the Conſideration of theſe attributes compared with the nature of things and the relation of Creatures, we muſt ſhow them the obligations and the reaſonableneſs of Religion. But if they are not diſpoſed to hearken to theſe convictions; then it muſt be made appear, that their irreligion proceeds not at all, as they pretend, from reaſon and underſtanding, but is *merely* an effect of conceited and affected vanity, of keeping corrupt and fooliſh company, and of their looſe and vicious lives. And in *That* caſe, we muſt firſt endeavour *in general*, to bring them to a ſerious *conſideration*, and to a ſober temper and diſpoſition of Mind; Which if once they can in *any* degree be brought to, they will ſoon ſee and be perſwaded, that God did not create this World, merely for Them to live fooliſhly and wickedly in for a few years, deſpiſing and affronting their Maker; and then to return again eternally into Nothing, as if they had never been.

Thirdly; Others we ſhall find, who will profeſs to believe the Being of God, and the natural Obligations of Religion; yet will deny the truth of all divine Revelation, and have no regard to the Authority of the *Goſpel*, which is the Religion appointed for the reconciliation of *Sinners*. To ſuch perſons as theſe, we muſt endeavour to ſhow the neceſſary difference, between the natural duty of *innocent* creatures, and a religion inſtituted for the Salvation of *Sinners*. That though it be indeed true, that God is appeaſable in his own nature, and that this may in ſome meaſure be collected even by the light of reaſon; yet that *Sinners* cannot have That confidence and aſſurance, which innocent perſons might have had; and that God may diſpenſe his mercy to them in what manner, and upon what conditions he himſelf ſhall be pleaſed to inſtitute. He may have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compaſſion on whom he himſelf, who is the alone unerring Judge, ſees fit to have compaſſion. That therefore *in general* it was agreeable to reaſon, to expect a revelation of the *manner* of God's diſpenſing his mercy to *Sinners*; and that in *particular*, the *Chriſtian* Religion (as taught by Chriſt and his Apoſtles in its original Simplicity) has both in its own nature all the *internal* evidence of its being *ſuch* a revelation, and alſo all the *outward* proofs of its being true and divine, that was reaſonable either for God to give, or Man expect. If the deniers of revelation have any of that true and impartial reaſon, by which they pretend to judge of things, they will hardly fail of being convinced by theſe conſiderations. But if they will not hearken to ſuch arguments, it is then but too evident, that they are not (as they would be thought to be,) Lovers of Natural Religion and true Reaſon, but that they only endeavour to hide Atheiſm and Irreligion under the ſpecious pretence of oppoſing Superſtition; And This is generally manifeſt by their vicious Lives; which will always give the lie to hypocriſy; and is an infallible demonſtration either of evil principles, or of none at all.

Fourthly; Among thoſe who have gone ſtill further than the former; and acknowledge, not only the Religion of *Nature*, but alſo the Goſpel of *Chriſt*; yet how *many* are there, who have corrupted this Doctrine of Truth and Simplicity with numberleſs Vanities and Superſtitions? How have ſome filled

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led the Church of God with Pageantry and empty Show, and turned the pure worſhip of God into idolatrous rites, not inferior in folly even to thoſe of the meaneſt and moſt ignorant Heathens? and how have others ſometimes in a contrary Extreme made Religion ſeem vile and contemptible, by ſetting themſelves unreaſonably againſt *All* Matters of decent form, and comely regularity? Should I here but hint at the chief of thoſe ſtrange imaginations, and extravagant Doctrines, and the innumerable corruptions of great and uſeful Truths, which Men of unſtable Principles have invented or been ſeduced into; it might ſeem to be an *endleſs* as well as an ungrateful labour. And yet againſt *every one* of theſe, are fit and proper remedies to be applied (out of Scripture,) and oppoſed at one and the ſame time, to errors of all kinds, and in all contrary extremes; contrary not only to truth, but, (as is the nature of falſhoods,) to each other alſo.

Fifthly, Further yet; even among thoſe who maintain the *Truth* in Speculation, and contend for no errors in doctrine; many there are nevertheleſs, who in a negligent and careleſs way, turning away their Thoughts from the Principles they have been inſtructed in, and being hurried away with the Temptations of a debauched World, are notoriouſly wicked in *Practice*; and the Truth which they hold, is in the moſt ſhameful *unrighteouſneſs*. And theſe; having already broke through all the acknowledged Obligations, not only of *natural* Duty and Conſcience, but even of revealed religion alſo; having deſpiſed and rejected all the promiſes and threatnings of the Goſpel; having been once in vain enlightned, and having experimented the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Spirit; having taſted the good word of God, and the Powers of the world to come; and yet after all this, having relapſed into a vicious and debauched courſe of life, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were ſanctified, an Unholy thing, and done deſpite unto the Spirit of Grace: Such perſons as *Theſe*, I ſay, have in a manner *precluded* and rendered *ineffectual* to themſelves all the uſual means of reformation, they have *prevented* all the arguments of inſtruction, and made void to themſelves before-hand all the motives of Religion. The only way of applying therefore to *This* ſort of perſons, is to endeavour to *awaken* their ſtupified and ſeared conſciences, by repreſenting to them the *Threatnings* of the Lord, under the juſt Circumſtances of their true and real Terrors; and to paint out before them in the moſt proper and affecting colours the inſupportable vengeance and final wrath of God revealed from heaven, againſt all impenitent and incorrigible Sinners; if perhaps by this means it may pleaſe God to open their eyes, and give them repentance, to the *Practice*, as well as the *acknowledgment* of the Truth.

Laſtly; Others there are on the contrary, who not only believe rightly, but alſo live well, in the Practice of all Holineſs, Righteouſneſs and Charity; and yet through indiſpoſition of body, and melancholy imaginations of mind, they are always diſconſolate and fearful of their own eſtate; diſtruſtful of the Mercy of God, and full of endleſs ſcruples and unreaſonable fears, ill-grounded ſuſpicions and vain anxieties of mind. Theſe muſt be treated in a quite contrary method to the former; with all poſſible Gentleneſs, Tenderneſs and Compaſſion. To theſe we muſt endeavour to give true notions of the nature of God, and of his threats and promiſes; of his mercy and juſtice, and of his gracious diſpenſations to Mankind: That when God is repreſented in Scripture as hating and abominating wicked men, this is by no means to be underſtood of the weakneſſes and infirmities of ſincere perſons, but of the impieties of ſuch as ſin preſumptuouſly and with a high hand: That the different degrees of affections with which men ſerve God, do frequently depend more on their conſtitution of body, than on their temper of mind: That evil and dreadful Thoughts, of which ſuch perſons, as I am now ſpeaking of, are apt to complain; do for the moſt part proceed from bodily indiſpoſition, and are not properly Sins: That thoſe who make the greateſt complaints of this kind, are generally very good and ſincere, though weak perſons; and not guilty of great and deliberate Crimes. With *many* other the *like* obſervations, ſuitable to ſuch caſes as theſe; which neither the *Time*, nor

the

the Variety of the *Caſes* themſelves, nor the infinite Diverſity of Circumſtances of the *Perſons* concerned, make poſſible for us, to *apply in particular*.

That, which remains therefore, after having given this brief Account of the many different Sorts and Degrees of Sinners, is only to exhort *All* Perſons, (ſince the Scriptures *muſt* be read and conſidered by *All*, and the Goſpel *muſt* be preached in general to perſons of *all* Capacities and Diſpoſitions whatever;) I ſay, That which remains is, to exhort, that *every one* would ſeriouſly and ſincerely endeavour to apply to *himſelf thoſe* things *only*, which upon due conſideration, and impartially examining of his own Conſcience, appear to be truly and properly applicable to him; that ſo neither the preſumptuous may be made confident by God's promiſes of *Mercy*, which belong not to *Them*; nor the Melancholy be driven to deſpair by the ſeverity of his *Threatnings*; but that every one may find food ſuitable to his particular condition, and, being made wiſe unto Salvation, may grow up into a perfect man, unto the meaſure of the Stature of the Fulneſs of Chriſt.

SERMON LXXIII.

Of the Duty of Prayer.

ROM. xii. latter part of verſe 12.

Continuing inſtant in Prayer.

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THE *Worſhip* of God, as it is in the *Law* the firſt and Great Commandment, the principal Foundation and Support of all Religion; ſo it is likewiſe *in it ſelf*, a moſt *reaſonable* Service, moſt *fit* and *becoming* the State and Condition of Mankind. Creatures *inferior* to Men, *muſt* obey the Will of God by the *Neceſſity* of their *Nature*, *without* any *Choice* of the *Will*; and are therefore incapable of paying properly any *Worſhip* to God, though they glorify him continually by affording *Matter for his Praiſe*. Creatures *ſuperior* to Men, do on the contrary by ſo *perfect* a Choice of the Will, continually worſhip God with an entire and uninterrupted Service; that they are probably very little more in danger of *chuſing* to oppoſe themſelves to the Will of God, than the inferior Creation is in any *poſſibility* of doing it. *Man*, who is as it were placed in the *middle* between Creatures Earthly and Heavenly, is endued with *Faculties*, which enable him clearly to underſtand the Obligation lying upon him, to obey conſtantly the Will of God; and yet at the ſame time is encompaſſed with ſuch Weakneſſes, as make him ſtand in need of perpetual Aſſiſtance, to enable him to live up in any tolerable Meaſure to the Obligations he is under. Upon this, is founded principally the Duty of *Prayer*; which is upon *Earth* the Primary and the

the Greateſt part of Divine Worſhip, as *Thankſgiving* is the Chief and Larger part of the ſame Worſhip in *Heaven*. *Obedience it ſelf*, or the Practice of Virtue and Righteouſneſs, in imitation of God, and in compliance with his Commands; is indeed ſtill more *excellent* than either of theſe: being, in the Sight of God, as much more *valuable* than either. *Prayer* or *Thankſgiving*; as the Duty of *Charity* or Univerſal Good Will to Mankind, is, in St. *Paul*'s Eſtimation, to be preferred before the Virtues of *Faith* or *Hope*. Behold, *to* Obey *is better than ſacrifice, and to hearken than the Fat of Rams*: The Meaning is, that a Virtuous and Good Life, is better not only than *Jewiſh* Rites and Ceremonies, but better even than the Beſt of any Other Worſhip, that is paid to God either on Earth or in Heaven. Nevertheleſs, as the *One* ought above all things to be *Done*, ſo the *Other* ought not by any means to be left *Undone*. As God is to be *Obeyed*, ſo he is to be *Worſhipped* alſo: Nay, the Worſhipping him is a Part of that very Obedience, and a Means to enable men to perform more acceptably the Other parts of their Obedience to him. It is in it ſelf a fit and moſt *reaſonable* Service, that we who *know* we receive all *from* him, ſhould *acknowledge* that we do ſo, by Asking of him. It is a high *Privilege*, that we are *permitted* to approach the Father of all things, and have acceſs to the Throne of Supreme Glory. It is, in the *natural* conſequence of the *thing it ſelf*, a Means of promoting the Practice of *Virtue*, by putting the Mind habitually into good Temper and Frame: And it is moreover, by the *Appointment of God*, a *Condition requiſite* in order to obtain His Bleſſing upon our Endeavours; becauſe he has promiſed, that he will be *nigh unto all them that call upon him, yea, unto all them that call upon him faithfully*; that *he will fulfil the Deſire of them that fear him*, that *he will alſo hear their Cry and will help them*; Pſ. cxlv. 18: Which Promiſe, our Saviour confirms by a moſt affectionate Compariſon, when he argues from the Love of a Father towards his Children, how much *more ready* God is to aſſiſt thoſe who worthily apply to him: *Ask*, ſaith he, *and it ſhall be given you; ſeek, and ye ſhall find:* —— *If a Son ſhall ask Bread of any of You that is a Father, will he give him a Stone? or if he ask a Fiſh, will he for a Fiſh give him a Serpent? or if he ſhall ask an Egg, will he offer him a Scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good Gifts to your Children; how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* Luke xi. 9.

The Reaſonableneſs and Neceſſity of the Duty of Prayer *in general*, being thus apparent both in Scripture and in the Nature of the thing it ſelf; I ſhall, in the following Diſcourſe, for our more *particular* Inſtruction in ſo important a Duty of Religion, conſider diſtinctly, 1*ſt*, The *Object* of Prayer, or the Perſon to whom it is to be directed; 2*dly*, The *Things* proper to be prayed for; and 3*dly*, The *Circumſtances* or *Qualifications neceſſary*, to make the Perſon who prays, and the Petitions which he puts up, acceptable before God.

I. *Firſt*; The *Object* of Prayer, or the Perſon *to* whom Prayers are to be directed, is *God*. Pſ. lxv. 1; *Unto Thee, O God, ſhall the Vow be performed; Thou that heareſt the Prayer, unto Thee ſhall all Fleſh come*. This, is the obvious Voice of Nature; that Application ſhould be made by all Creatures, for a continual Supply of all their wants, to the ſupreme Father and Governor of All, who is *Above all, and through all, and in all*; or, as the Scripture in another place with no leſs elegancy expreſſes it, *Of whom and through whom and to whom are all things*. This is the Firſt and Great Commandment, in *Nature* as well as in *Revelation*. And it is very obſervable, as St. *Paul* at large demonſtrates in the 1*ſt* chapter to the *Romans*, that in proportion as the Heathen World departed from this original and natural Worſhip of the Maker of all things, to the feigning for themſelves a Multitude of Gods; ſo did the corruption of their *Manners* likewiſe increaſe in all Other inſtances of Immorality, till they were *given over to a reprobate mind*, to *work all* Unrighteouſneſs *with Greedineſs*. The *Foundation* of Prayer is laid, in the *Attributes* of God; and *every Perfection* of his Nature, affords a diſtinct Ground or Reaſon, for our applying our ſelves in this manner to him. His *Omnipreſence* teaches us, that he is ever *Near*; His *Omniſcience*, that he always *knows* our Petitions; His *Omnipotence*, that he is *Able* to grant them; His *Goodneſs*, that he is *Willing* to give us whatever is for our Real Benefit and Advantage; His *Truth*, that he will not fail to perform all his gracious Promiſes; and his *Mercy*, that he will

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will not reject even *Sinners* when truly *penitent*, but will *hear* and *forgive* them upon their ſincere Humiliation and Amendment. Thus *All* the Attributes of God, afford ſo many ſeveral Reaſons, and diſtinct Motives or Arguments, to encourage us in the Duty of Prayer to him. Nor can it here reaſonably be objected, that God, by reaſon of his Omniſcience, *knows already* what we want, before we ask for it; and, by reaſon of his Goodneſs, will *do what is fit*, whether we ask for it or no; and that therefore, the putting up of Prayers to him, is *needleſs*. This (I ſay) is no juſt Objection. For, as to the *firſt* part of the Difficulty, his *knowing already* what we want, before we ask for it; the Anſwer is evident; that the deſign of our putting up Petitions to him, is not for His *Information*, but for a Teſtimony of Our *Acknowledgment* of our dependance upon him. We do not ask of God, in order to *acquaint* Him, what things we ſtand in need of; but to expreſs the Senſe *we our ſelves* have, of his being alone able to ſupply our Wants, and of his being the only Author of every good Gift. And then, as to the *ſecond* part of the Objection; *viz.* our being ſure that His Goodneſs will always move him to do *what is it ſelf fit*, whether we ask it or no; the Anſwer is no leſs plain; that That very *Fitneſs* of things, which is conſidered in the preſent caſe, ariſes in great meaſure from the Qualification of the *Perſons*; And one principal Qualification, which makes any perſon *fit* to receive Bleſſings from God, is That Diſpoſition of Mind, from whence proceedeth *Prayer* out of a *pure Heart*, and with *Lips unfeigned*. God therefore *will* indeed always do what is *fit*, whether men ask it of him or no; But This is no reaſon to neglect his Worſhip; Becauſe, if men refuſe to pay him this juſt and ſmall Tribute, it will *upon That very account* become a thing *fit and reaſonable in it ſelf*, that they ſhould fall ſhort of the divine Bleſſings. Every Attribute of God therefore, is a juſt Ground and Reaſon of Prayer to him; and a ſufficient Argument alſo, why Prayer ſhould be offered unto *Him alone*. To pray to inferior Beings, to Angels or to departed Saints; as has long been the practice of the Church of *Rome*; is evidently *needleſs*; becauſe God, we are ſure, is always *near*, being himſelf every where preſent. It is moreover *Preſumption* and great *Vanity*; an *intruding into Things which men have not ſeen*, being *vainly puffed up by their fleſhly mind*, and taking upon themſelves *to be wiſe above what is written*: For they do not ſo much as *pretend*, that praying to Saints and Angels is any where *commanded*. *Laſtly*, it does plainly *derogate* from the *Honour of God*; becauſe it *diſtracts* mens *Devotions*, and *divides* that *affection* and *reliance of mind*, which ought to be placed upon God alone. If it be alledged, that frail and ſinful men cannot *of themſelves* acceptably approach the Supreme Throne of God; we have, by divine Appointment, a ſufficient Mediator and *Advocate with the Father*, *Jeſus Chriſt the Righteous*; who ſitteth continually on the right hand of God, as our great High-Prieſt and Interceſſor, to mediate for us, and to offer up our Prayers unto the *Father*. *Through* him alone, *we* all *have an acceſs*, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *by One Spirit unto the* Father; *Eph.* ii. 18. And our Lord's *own* direction is, *Joh.* xv. 16; *Whatſoever ye ſhall ask of the* Father *in* my Name, *he will give it you*. And; *when ye pray, ſay, Our* Father *which art in Heaven*: And again; *The Hour cometh, and now is, when the true Worſhippers ſhall worſhip the* Father *in Spirit and in Truth*. This therefore is the direction the Scripture gives us, concerning the *Object* of Prayer; that Prayer is to be directed *to* God, *through* Chriſt. And as praying *to* falſe *Gods*, derogates from the Honour of the One True *God*; ſo praying *by* or *through* the interceſſion of falſe and fictitious *Mediators*, derogates in like manner from the Honour of *Chriſt*, the Only true *Mediator*. For as *there is One* God, ſo there is alſo, ſaith the Apoſtle, *One Mediator between God and Men*; And they who *hold not this Head*, (ſpeaking of Angel-worſhippers, *Col.* ii. 18. who join *Other* Mediators with Him whom Alone God has appointed to That Office,) they *beguile* themſelves (ſays he) *of their reward*. Errors of *This* ſort, have been the general Sin of Mankind in all Ages; and it is very unaccountable, how greedily even *Chriſtians*, after the cleareſt revelation of the Will of God, have run into the ſame Miſtake. This therefore may ſuffice concerning the *1ſt* Head, namely the *Object* of Prayer, or the Perſon *to* whom Prayers are to be directed.

II. *Secondly*; I propoſed to conſider in the *next* place, the *Things* that are proper to be *prayed for*. And here, there cannot be given any particular Directions, which

which will exactly ſuit the Circumſtances of different Perſons. Every one, beſt underſtands his own Wants and Neceſſities; and if his Prayers be not *mere Forms*, he will in his own Heart naturally adjuſt them to his own Circumſtances: And, for exactneſs or propriety of *Expreſſion*, to *This* God has no regard. All the Advice that can be given, is, in general, that men conſider, according to the beſt of their abilities, what is ſuitable to the Nature of *God* to give, and proper for *Them* to ask. We are to pray *for* every thing that is *good*, and *againſt* every thing that is *evil*; for *our ſelves*, and for *others*; for *all* Mankind, even for thoſe that are our *Enemies*; that God would convert them, and bring them finally to Salvation. We are to pray, for the Forgiveneſs of *paſt* Sins; and that we may be preſerved from ſuch, as we might fall into *for the future*. In a word; for a competent meaſure, of all the good things of the *preſent* life; and, above *all* things, that we fall not ſhort of the Happineſs of *that to come*. The Method our Saviour has laid down in the Form of his own compoſing, is the beſt Direction in This caſe. He teaches us to pray in the *firſt* place, that the Honour and *Kingdom* of God may be advanced among men, by the Practice of Virtue and by our *Obedience to his Will*: According to the Direction he elſewhere gives, that we ſhould firſt *ſeek the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs*, and that then *all* other *things ſhould be added unto us*. For want of obſerving which direction, St. *James* declares to ſome in *His* time, *Jam.* iv. 3; *Ye ask, and receive not, becauſe ye ask amiſs, that ye may conſume it upon your Luſts*. That which to every good man, cannot but be firſt and principal in the Deſire of his Heart; (namely, the improvement of himſelf and Others in true Religion;) *ought* alſo to be, and naturally *will* be, the Primary Subject of his Prayers. Some devout perſons, have in this matter run into the contrary Extreme; and, becauſe we *are* indeed weak and dependent creatures, and can do nothing without the divine Aſſiſtance; therefore they have ſuppoſed and taught, that men can do nothing at all for themſelves as to any *religious* improvement, but muſt rely wholly upon God to do every thing *for* them and *in* them: Not conſidering, that ſpiritual *Abilities* are derived from God and depend on him, juſt in the ſame manner as all natural *Powers and Faculties* do; In which it is evident God does not act *for* us, but gives *us* Power to act for *our ſelves*; And therefore in *ſpiritual* matters likewiſe, God *ſo* gives us *to will and to do*, as that *by* his giving us thoſe Powers, we are obliged therewith to *work out our own Salvation*. For a continual Supply therefore of theſe Powers, and for the Aſſiſtance of the divine Spirit in the Uſe of them; we are bound to pray; and we cannot innocently want them, becauſe God has promiſed that he *will give* his Holy Spirit, to them that ſincerely ask him.

Next, after theſe *Spiritual* Bleſſings, our Saviour directs us to pray for our *daily bread*; for the neceſſaries and conveniencies of this *temporal* Life: To ſhow us, that his Religion does not teach men to neglect the World wholly, and to be uſeleſs in it; but only not to abuſe it by Senſuality and Debauchery.

And becauſe we are ſubject to daily infirmities, he teaches us in the next place to pray daily for the *forgiveneſs of our Sins*: In which part of our petitions, ſincere minds ought to take care, that we pray not in mere Form, for the forgiveneſs of Sins equally, which we *have* or *have not* committed; but that we really deſire to *amend* thoſe Faults, which we particularly pray to have forgiven.

Laſtly, Becauſe no man knows his own Strength for the future, our Lord directs us to pray that we may eſcape great Temptations, and that we fall not under the Power of the Evil One.

Theſe are the beſt directions that can be given, concerning the *Matter* or *Things to be prayed for*. Which directions being of Neceſſity no other than *general*, are and muſt be left to be diverſified *in particular*, according to every man's own Senſe of his private and perſonal Wants.

III. *Thirdly*; The *third* and *laſt* thing I propoſed, was to conſider the *Circumſtances* or *Qualifications neceſſary*, to make the Perſon who prays, and the Petitions which he puts up, acceptable before God. And,

1ſt; All Prayer, muſt be accompanied with *Attention of Mind*. This our Saviour expreſſes by that variation of phraſe, *Matt.* vii. 7; Ask, *and it ſhall be given you*; ſeek, *and ye ſhall find*; knock, *and it ſhall be opened unto you*. Where the Heart and Mind goes not along with the Mouth, Prayer is but an empty Form;

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and the expreſſion of the Prophet may juſtly be applied, *This people draws near me with their lips, but their Heart is far from me.* Such perſons have no reaſon, and indeed ſeem not much to expect, that their Prayers ſhould be heard: But *the effectual* fervent *prayer of a righteous man, availeth much*; Jam. v. 16.

2*dly*; Prayers muſt be put up with *conſtancy, importunity* and *perſeverance. Pray*, ſays the Apoſtle, *without* ceaſing; 1 *Theſſ.* v. 17. And our Saviour ſpake two Parables; one concerning a man perſuaded by his Friend's importunity, to riſe in the night, and lend him what he wanted; and the Other concerning an unjuſt Judge, prevailed upon by the importunity of a poor Widow to do her juſtice; Theſe two Parables, ſays the Evangeliſt, ſpake Jeſus, *to the end that men ought* Always *to pray, and not to faint*; Luk. xviii. 1; and xi. 5. The meaning is; not that men are to ſpend their *whole time* in prayers; which is the Monkiſh Superſtition: or that Enthuſiaſts who pride themſelves in the *length* of their Prayers, ſhall be heard the better for their *much ſpeaking*: but that it is needful for men, by *conſtant and periodical* Returns of Prayer, to keep up in their minds a *continual* Senſe of God, and of their Dependence upon him.

3*dly*, Prayer, muſt always be with *Submiſſion* to the Will of God. *Our* Judgments, are very weak and fallible; and we often know not, what will hurt or profit us. The things therefore which we muſt earneſtly deſire, and which we may very lawfully pray for; yet ought always to be ſubmitted, to the infinite Wiſdom and good pleaſure of God. *We know not*, ſaith St. *Paul, what we ſhould pray for as we ought*, Rom. viii. 26; and, *Ye know not what ye ask*, ſaith our Lord to two of his Apoſtles, *Matt.* xx, 21. And he himſelf has ſet us an Example beyond all exception, *Luk.* xxii. 42; *Father, if thou be willing, remove this Cup from me; nevertheleſs, not My Will, but Thine be done.*

4*thly*; Prayers muſt be put up, with ſteddy *Faith* towards God. *Jam.* i. 6; *But let him ask in* Faith, *nothing wavering.* And *Mar.* xi. 24; *What things ſoever*, ſays our Saviour, *ye deſire when ye pray; believe that ye receive them, and ye* ſhall *have them.* It muſt be obſerved, that this remarkable promiſe, is made *expreſly* concerning the Gift of *Miracles*; concerning *removing a Mountain*, and *caſting it into the Sea*; as it is in the verſe before: and muſt not be applied to any *other* perſons or things, but where that ſingular Gift was expreſly promiſed. In *other* caſes, and times, the *Faith* towards God, which is requiſite in Prayer, muſt be underſtood *in proportion*, to be, not a vain enthuſiaſtical preſumption, of being ſure to obtain whatever we deſire; (of which no Promiſe was ever made us;) but a rational Perſuaſion and firm Belief, that God is *Able* to perform whatever he wills, and *Willing* to do for us whatever is really fit and reaſonable. The Greateſt Objection, that vain men have ever made in This caſe againſt the Faith I am ſpeaking of, is, that things ſeem regularly to proceed in the courſe of *Nature*, and according to the efficiency of *ſecond* Cauſes; and that therefore, *What is the Almighty, that we ſhould ſerve him? and what Profit ſhould we have, if we pray unto him?* Job xxi. 15. But the Anſwer is plain, that *Second Cauſes* are nothing more, than *Inſtruments* in the hand of the *Firſt* Cauſe. For though men are apt to imagine, that thoſe things only, which are *miraculous*, do immediately evidence the Power of God; yet, in reality, the things which we call *natural*, do perfectly evidence the ſame Power. Only, what the Power of God does conſtantly and regularly, we are too apt to forget proceeds from That Power; and we aſcribe it to *Nature*, which is Nothing at all, but a mere empty Word. For as if from the conſtant and regular continuance of the *day-light*, men ſhould ceaſe to obſerve that there is ſuch a thing as the *Sun* in the Heavens, from whence That *Light* proceeds; ſo it is equally abſurd to imagine, that the Effects of *Nature* (as we call them) could regularly go on, without the Being and Providence of *God*, who is indeed the Alone Cauſe of thoſe Effects. No man, enquiring after the *Architect* of a moſt perfect Building, would take it for a ſatisfactory Anſwer, to be told that it was *natural* for the Fabrick to be built in That Form. Yet the caſe is exactly the ſame, when men contentedly exclude conſideration of God, merely by ſtyling his Workmanſhip the Effects of *Nature*.

5*thly*; As acceptable Prayers muſt be put up with *ſteddy Faith* towards *God*, ſo muſt they alſo with *Charity and Forgiveneſs* towards *Men*. For he that is Cruel and

and Unmerciful towards a *Man like himſelf*; how ſhould he expect Forgiveneſs at the Hands of *God!* Our Lord has interwoven the Neceſſity of This Qualification, into the very *expreſſion* of our daily Prayer. And by that moſt affectionate Parable, of the Servant who being forgiven ten thouſand talents, refuſed to forgive his Fellow-ſervant one hundred pence; he has taught us upon what Conditions, we may expect that our *heavenly Father* will forgive *Us*. SERM. LXXIII.

Laſtly; Prayers muſt be offered up, with *pure hands* and with a *clean heart*. That is to ſay; God will be *worſhipped* by thoſe only, who ſincerely deſire to *obey* him. The Prayers and Sacrifices, and all the external Devotions that a wicked man is capable of performing, are but ſo many mockeries and provocations of God. *Prov.* xxviii. 9; *He that turneth away his ear from hearing the Law, even his* Prayer *ſhall be Abomination.* And This *ends* in the ſame obſervation, wherewith I *began* upon this Subject; and which indeed is the *firſt* and the *laſt* Truth, in the right Underſtanding of Religion; *viz.* that the Worſhip or Sacrifice moſt acceptable to God, is the Obedience of a Virtuous and Religious Life.

There are ſeveral other Heads, under which Prayer may be diſtinguiſhed. As, *private* Prayer; concerning which, our Saviour gives large directions in the vi*th* chapter of St. *Matthew*. *Family-Prayer*; concerning which may be underſtood That character of *Abraham*, Gen. xviii. 19, *I know him, that he will command his children and his houſhold after him, and they ſhall keep the way of the Lord.* And, *Laſtly*, *Publick Prayer* in the Aſſemblies of the Church; for the publick acknowledgment of God's Power and Glory, among men. Concerning Each of which, there needs no Enlargement; what has been ſaid in the foregoing Diſcourſe concerning Prayer in *general*, being eaſily applicable in every one's Mind to each of theſe Heads in *particular*.

SERMON

SERMON LXXIV.

Againſt too great Anxiety in Worldly Matters.

MATT. vi. 31, 32.

Therefore take no thought ſaying, What ſhall we eat, or what ſhall we drink, or wherewithal ſhall we be clothed? For after all theſe things do the Gentiles ſeek. For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all theſe things.

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THE Duty of Contentment and Reſignation to the Will of God, is a Duty whoſe obligation is evident even from the Law of *Nature*. For ſince we at firſt received our very Being from God, and owe our Preſervation to him every moment, and every thing we enjoy is his free Gift; it is plain, that All Thanks are due to him for whatever good we *receive*; and no man has any juſt reaſon to repine againſt Providence, for the *want* of ſuch good things as he has no right to demand. As to the *Calamities* and *Troubles* incident to human Life; with regard to *Theſe* alſo, *Sinful* Creatures have no juſt cauſe of murmuring: For *wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the Puniſhment of his Sins*? Lam. iii. 39. Under the Revelation of the *Goſpel*, the Grounds and Motives of Contentment are become yet *much ſtronger*, ſince the Concerns of this

this preſent World, ſhort and uncertain and tranſitory in Themſelves, appear ſtill *more* tranſitory, when compared with that *Life and Immortality* which is now *brought to Light*; and the *Afflictions* of this *preſent* time, *are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that ſhall be revealed hereafter*. Proportionable to the real Value of Things, ought to be mens Care and Concern about them. And therefore with the *greateſt reaſon*, our Saviour, in exhorting his Diſciples to take care of their *eternal* Intereſt, bids them, *comparatively* ſpeaking, to *take* No *thought what they ſhould eat, or what they ſhould drink, or wherewithal they ſhould be clothed*; *For after all theſe things* (ſays he) *do the Gentiles ſeek: For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all theſe things.* *Literally* underſtood, the Precept, to the greateſt part of Chriſtians, is manifeſtly impracticable: For the *Neceſſaries of Life* muſt needs be taken care for; and without the Support of the *preſent* life, there can be no room for the practice of thoſe Virtues, by which we are to be prepared for that which is *to come*. There *muſt* therefore be *ſome Diſtinctions* made, in our underſtanding This and the like Precepts: For want of attending to which, Many may be apt to ſay, *This is a hard ſaying, and who can bear it?* And yet in reality, the diſtinctions upon which the right underſtanding of this Precept depends, are as plain and obvious, in the nature of the Thing, and in the conſtruction and connexion of the Words themſelves, as other the moſt uſual figures and comparative ways of expreſſion in common Speech, which no man ever miſtakes. To ſet this matter therefore in a clear and diſtinct Light, I obſerve

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I. *Firſt*; That there was a particular *time*, and there were particular *perſons*, when and to whom, and when and to whom *only*, this Precept was given in its *literal* and *ſtrict* ſenſe. Our Saviour ſent forth his Apoſtles to preach the Goſpel *from City to City*, in ſuch a manner as was altogether inconſiſtent with their attending to *Any* worldly affairs. Accordingly he inveſted them with miraculous Powers, and promiſed to afford them a miraculous Support. And ſuitable to the Circumſtances of ſuch a Miſſion, were the Precepts he gave them to obſerve therein. *Sell that ye have, and give alms.* *Freely ye have received, freely give.* *Provide neither gold nor ſilver nor braſs in your purſes: Nor ſcrip for your journey; neither two coats, neither ſhoes, nor yet ſtaves; for the workman is worthy of his meat.* At *another* time, and in *other* circumſtances, his directions to them were very different: Luk. xxii. 36; Now *he that hath a purſe, let him take it, and likewiſe his ſcrip; and he that hath no ſword, let him ſell his garment and buy one.* In like manner the words of the *Text*, conſidered as ſpoken to the *Apoſtles*, during their preaching from one City to another, may well be underſtood literally: *Take no thought, what ye ſhall eat, or what ye ſhall drink, or wherewithal ye ſhall be clothed.* Ver. 34; *Take no thought*, no, not ſo much as *for the morrow*; *for the morrow ſhall take thought for the things of itſelf.*

Luk. xii. 33. Matt. x. 8.

But when the words are conſidered as a *general* direction, to *all* Chriſtians, at *all* times, and in *all* circumſtances; then it is manifeſt they muſt be underſtood to be a caution againſt *ſuch* Worldly Cares, as are inconſiſtent with *Our* Duty; in like manner as to the Apoſtles, they were at that particular Time a prohibition of *All* Worldly cares, as being inconſiſtent with *Their* Duty. The Profeſſors of Chriſt's religion, muſt at *no* time, and in *no* circumſtances, be *ſo* ſollicitous; they muſt in *no* caſe be *ſo* anxious, about the affairs of the *preſent* Life, as to neglect the greater and more important Concerns of That which is *to come*. And *This* ſenſe of the words is juſtified by the *Argument* our Saviour makes uſe of in the Context, ver. 24; *No man can ſerve two maſters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or elſe he will hold to the one, and deſpiſe the other: Ye cannot ſerve God and Mammon:* Therefore *I ſay unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye ſhall eat, or what ye ſhall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye ſhall put on:* That is, do not *ſo* take thought about theſe things, as to become Servants of Mammon, and forget your Duty towards your heavenly Maſter. St. *John* in his firſt Epiſtle, ch. ii. 15, gives a like Exhortation; *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; If any man love the world, the Love of the Father is not in him.* And the words of our Saviour, ver. 34. of This chapter; *Take no thought for the* morrow; as they might well be applied to the *Apoſtles* in the *literal* ſenſe, during the time of their Miſſion; ſo with regard to Chriſtians in *all* Ages, (the word, *mor-*

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row, ſignifying *figuratively* the indefinite uncertain future time of man's life,) they may very reaſonably, (according to the forementioned Argument drawn by our Lord from the impoſſibility of ſerving both God and Mammon,) they may very reaſonably be underſtood *only* as a Prohibition of That *Care of the World*, which he himſelf elſewhere deſcribes, (*Matt.* xiii. 22.) as *choaking the word*, ſo that it *becometh unfruitful*: It being indeed very natural for worldly and ambitious minds, continually to enlarge their Proſpect of *the morrow*, and to extend their Hopes and Deſigns from one uncertain indeterminate time to another; 'till Death unexpected blaſts all their Thoughts at once, and ſurprizes them unfruitful of any Works of Righteouſneſs. Which Folly is very affectionately reproved by our Saviour in the Parable of the Rich man, who was bleſſing himſelf in the vain Thoughts of his *Stores laid up for many years, that very night* when his *Soul* was *required of him*.

II. *Secondly*, I obſerve that the words of the Text, when conſidered as a *general* Command to *all* Chriſtians, are very reaſonably to be underſtood in this greater *latitude* of ſignification; becauſe, if we attend to the connexion of the whole ſentence in this and the following verſes, we ſhall find the expreſſion to be, not *abſolute*, but *comparative*. *Take no Thought* (ſays our Lord) *what ye ſhall eat, or what ye ſhall drink*; —— but *ſeek ye firſt*, or *principally*, (in St. *Luke* it is, ſeek ye *rather*) *the Kingdom of God*. Now, according to the Analogy of the *Jewiſh* language, *Two* Sentences connected in this manner by way of oppoſition, are in ſenſe the ſame *only*, as if it had been ſaid in *One*; *Be* more *careful to attain the Kingdom of God, than the Conveniencies of this preſent Life*.

There are in Scripture *Many* very remarkable Expreſſions of this kind.

In the *Old Teſtament*, Mal. i. 2, 3. *Jacob have I loved*, ſays God, *and Eſau have I hated*. The Propoſitions are not to be underſtood aſunder, but to be taken together as One; *Jacob have I loved* more *than Eſau*. For God did not intend to expreſs *Hatred* towards *Eſau*; but only to love *Jacob* comparatively with a *greater Love*. Again, *Jer.* vii. 22; *I ſpake* Not *unto your Fathers, nor commanded them, in the day that I brought them out of the Land of Egypt, concerning Burnt-offerings or Sacrifices*; *but this Thing commanded I them, ſaying, Obey my Voice*. The two parts of this ſentence of the Prophet, are not to be taken ſeparately, as if he affirmed that God did *not* require Burnt-offerings *at all*; (for it is certain he *did* command them in moſt expreſs words in the Law;) but the whole is to be underſtood together, that God did not *inſiſt upon Burnt-Offerings ſo much*, as upon Obedience to the Commandments of the *moral Law*. There is a like expreſſion, *Hoſ.* vi. 6; *I deſired Mercy, and* not *Sacrifice*. The meaning is not, that God did *not* require Sacrifice; but that he deſired Mercy *rather* than Sacrifice, and (as it follows in the very next words,) *the Knowledge of the Lord more than Burnt-offerings*.

In the *New Teſtament*, the ſame manner of expreſſion, agreeable to the nature of the *Jewiſh* language, is likewiſe frequently uſed; and it is neceſſary to be taken notice of, in order to the true Underſtanding of ſeveral Paſſages. *Joh.* xvii. 9; *I pray* not *for the world*, ſays our Saviour, *but for them which thou haſt given me*. His meaning is; not, that he did not *at all* deſire the Converſion and Salvation of the *Whole World*; but that his principal and particular Regard, in the Petitions he was at This time putting up, was towards thoſe who at preſent actually believed on his Name. Again, in his Diſcourſe with the Woman of *Canaan*; Matt. xv. 24: *I am* not *ſent*, ſays he, *but to the loſt Sheep of the houſe of Iſrael*. The meaning is not abſolute, (as might ſeem from the firſt part of the ſentence,) that he was *not* ſent *at all* to any others than the *Jews* only; but that he was not ſent ſo *ſoon*, ſo *immediately*, ſo *principally*; his miſſion was not to be made known ſo *early*, to any other nation, as to the *loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael*. For, that he *was* alſo, in proceſs of time, to be a Light to lighten the *Gentiles*, as well as to be the glory of his people *Iſrael*, the Scriptures of the Prophets expreſly enough declared; and our Saviour himſelf in this very place ſufficiently intimates, when immediately after That ſeeming Refuſal, yet he effectually granted this Stranger's requeſt, by healing the infirmity of her daughter. And in his inſtructions to his Diſciples, ch. x. 5; he ſpeaks with leſs obſcurity: *Go not into the way of the Gentiles*; — *but go* rather *to the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael*. Which afterwards was ſtill *more clear-*

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ly expreſſed; *Acts* xiii. 46; *It was neceſſary that the word of God ſhould* firſt *be ſpoken to the Jews, but* afterwards *to the Gentiles.*

In St. *Paul's* Epiſtles, there are many Inſtances of the like manner of ſpeaking. 1 *Tim.* ii. 14; *Adam was* not *deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the tranſgreſſion:* His Meaning is not to ſay, that *Adam* was not deceived *at all*; but that the Woman being *firſt* deceived, began the tranſgreſſion. 1 *Cor.* vi. 12; *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient:* He never intended to affirm, that all Actions were lawful; but that of thoſe Actions which were confeſſedly lawful, yet it did not follow that they were All expedient. In the ſame epiſtle, ch. i. 17; *Chriſt ſent me not to baptize, but to preach the Goſpel:* He does not mean abſolutely, that he was not to baptize at all; but that his proper and peculiar Office, was not ſo much to baptize men with his own hands, as to preach the Goſpel to them in order to their converſion. To mention but One place more; *Rom.* vi. 17; *God be thanked,* ſays he, *that ye* were *the Servants of Sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart That Form of Doctrine which was delivered you.* According to the manner of ſpeaking in modern languages, it muſt needs ſeem a very ſtrange and unuſual expreſſion; *God be thanked, that ye* were *the Servants of Sin:* But in the *Jewiſh* Idiom it was very intelligible, that the Two parts of the ſentence ſhould be taken as One: *God be thanked,* for that *ye,* who Formerly were *the Servants of Sin, have* Now *obeyed from the Heart That Form of Doctrine which was delivered you.*

And thus therefore likewiſe in the words of the Text; if the connexion of the whole be conſidered, and the two parts of the Sentence be united in one; (*Take no thought, ſaying, what ſhall we eat, or what ſhall we drink,* —— *but ſeek ye* firſt *the Kingdom of God*;) the ſenſe, it is very clear, will be *comparative,* and amount only to This: Be not *ſo* ſollicitous for the things of this *preſent* life, as to neglect the more important Concerns of That which is *to come*: But let your *principal* and *chief* Care be to ſecure your *eternal* Intereſt; and the Bleſſing of Providence upon your ordinary induſtry, will provide you ſuch a proportion of *temporal* accommodations, as he ſhall ſee beſt and moſt expedient for you. In ſome particular caſes, God has given extraordinary Examples of this kind: As in the inſtance of *Solomon,* 1 *Kings* iii. 11; *God ſaid unto him, Becauſe thou haſt* —— *not asked for thyſelf* — *riches,* — *nor* — *the life of thine enemies, but* — *Underſtanding to diſcern judgment; behold, I have--given thee a wiſe and an underſtanding heart;--and I have alſo given thee that which thou haſt not asked, both Riches and Honour.* Our Saviour does not promiſe any thing of this nature to his Diſciples, becauſe his Kingdom is not of this world. But a *competency* of temporal Bleſſings he encourages them to expect ſhall *be added unto them*; always excepting the caſe of perſecution, to which is annexed a Promiſe of peculiar Rewards.

III. *Thirdly*; I obſerve further, that the Precept in the Text, when conſidered as a *general* Command to *all* Chriſtians, appears plainly intended to be underſtood with ſome latitude, from the *Reaſon* aſſigned by our Lord in the very words themſelves, For *after all theſe things do the* Gentiles *ſeek. Take no Thought what ye ſhall eat, or what ye ſhall drink*; For, *after all theſe things do the* Gentiles *ſeek.* The thing therefore here prohibited by our Lord to *His* Diſciples, is *ſuch* a ſollicitude after the affairs of the World, as the *Gentiles* have, who *know not God*; who have neither a right Senſe of the *Providence* of God, in diſpoſing of all *temporal* things here upon *earth*; nor That certain expectation, which the Goſpel has given us, of an *eternal* Kingdom hereafter in the *Heavens.* Theſe men, (excepting ſome few Noble Spirits among them, of whom the World was not worthy;) the generality of them lived according to that Epicurean Maxim, *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die*; placing the whole of their happineſs in *ſuch* enjoyments, as they poſſeſſed in common with the Beaſts that periſh. Which gratifications of ſenſe, our Saviour commanded *His* Diſciples to have no regard for, *comparatively* with their Care for the Concerns of Eternity.

IV. *Fourthly* and *Laſtly*; That the words of the Text, when applied to *all Chriſtians in general,* are not to be underſtood in the ſtrict and *literal* Senſe, but in That *comparative* manner I have now explained; appears further from the *additional reaſon* ſubjoined by our Saviour in the *laſt* clauſe: *For your heavenly Father* knoweth

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knoweth, *that ye have need of all theſe things.* Our heavenly Father's *knowing that we have need of all theſe things*, is not a reaſon againſt our taking Thought for them in *That method* of Labour and honeſt Induſtry, by which he himſelf, who *knows that we have need of them*, has appointed them to be obtained; but it is a reaſon only againſt *ſuch* ſollicitude about them, as implies either a *Diſtruſting* of his Providence, or the not having a right *ſenſe* of it, or not making a juſt *acknowledgment* of it in all things. The manner of our Saviour's arguing in this particular, is exactly parallel to the directions we find him giving in This very chapter, concerning *Prayer*. Ver. 7; *Ye*, ſays he, *when ye pray, uſe not vain repetitions, as the Heathen do; for they think that they ſhall be heard for their much ſpeaking: Be not ye therefore like unto Them; for your Father* knoweth *what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.* The expreſſion is very nearly the ſame as in the words of the Text, *Your heavenly Father* knoweth *that ye have need of all theſe things.* Yet in the very next words, ver. 9, he inſtructs them *how* they ſhould pray for thoſe very things, their want of which, he had juſt told them, God perfectly knew before-hand: *After* This *manner* (ſays he) *pray ye; Our Father which art in Heaven, — give us this day our daily Bread.* As therefore our Saviour in his inſtructions about *Prayer*, by telling his Diſciples that their heavenly Father knows *what things they have need of, before they ask him*; does not encourage them to forbear Praying *at all*, but directs them to pray in *ſuch a manner* as is moſt proper to expreſs their juſt Acknowledgment of *Him*, and entire Dependence upon *Him*, whom they know to be beforehand perfectly acquainted with all their Wants: So in the *Text* likewiſe, by telling us that our Father knows *we have need of all theſe things*, it is plain he does not mean to encourage us (in general and ordinary caſes) to neglect the uſual and natural means of providing for our Subſiſtence; but only (as I before obſerved) forbids *ſuch* a Sollicitude about Worldly Affairs, as implies either a *Diſtruſting* of God's Providence, or the not having a right *Senſe* of it, or not making a juſt *acknowledgment* of it in all things. A Diſciple of Chriſt, muſt have it conſtantly and habitually impreſs'd upon his Mind, that it is our *heavenly Father* who continually ſupplies us with neceſſaries, for the *Preſervation* of that Being which he at firſt *Gave* us: That it is *He* who *cauſes* His *Sun to riſe*, and *ſends* us *Rain and fruitful Seaſons, filling our Hearts with Food and Gladneſs:* That it is *He* who (in the Pſalmiſt's expreſſion) *maketh the Graſs to grow upon the mountains; giving* even *to the* Beaſt *his food, and to the young Ravens which cry*; and *filling all things living, with plenteouſneſs*: Or, as our Saviour himſelf deſcribes it ſtill more ſublimely, in the words juſt before my Text; *Behold* (ſays he) *the Fowls of the Air; they ſow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into Barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth Them*: And, *conſider the Lilies of the Field; — they toil not, neither do they ſpin; And yet I ſay unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of Them: Wherefore if God ſo clothe the graſs of the Field, which to day is, and to morrow is caſt into the oven, ſhall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little Faith?* What men careleſs and ignorant of the Truth, uſually and vulgarly ſtile *Natural Cauſes*, are indeed nothing but mere inanimate *Inſtruments* in the hands of God; and the *Courſe of Nature*, as it is commonly called, is, in the truth and reality of things, a mere *empty Name*, any otherwiſe than as ſignifying, by an abſtract way of ſpeaking, the *regularity* of *His* Operations who made and governs all things. It is *He alone* therefore, who *gives us richly all things to enjoy*; even all *thoſe* things, which, in a vulgar and careleſs way of ſpeaking, we uſually aſcribe to *natural* and *inanimate Cauſes*. Which very ſame Cauſes, whenſoever he pleaſes, he can make to be the Inſtruments of our *Puniſhment* as well as of our *Support*. He can (as *Moſes* elegantly expreſſes it; he can) *make the Heavens to be Braſs, and the Earth Iron:* He can *ſcorch* with Drought, or *drown* with Moiſture, or *blaſt* with unwholſome Winds, in order to deſtroy with Famine, and *make a fruitful land barren for the Wickedneſs of them that dwell therein:* Or, without removing the *Bleſſings themſelves* of Nature, he can at any time withdraw the *Benefit* and the *Effect* of them. For *man liveth not by Bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God*; that is, by *His* Bleſſing upon the inſtruments of Nature. Which Bleſſing whenſoever he pleaſes to withdraw, and *with Rebukes doth chaſten man for Sin, he maketh his Beauty to conſume away, as it were a Moth fretting a garment*; Pſ. xxxix. 11. Without the divine

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Bleſſing therefore, all Care, all Labour, all induſtry is in vain; nay, even the very *Poſſeſſion* of all temporal good things, will afford no enjoyment. But *They* who, by ſeeking with their firſt and chief care the righteouſneſs of God's Kingdom, have ſecured to themſelves *His* Favour and Bleſſing, may ſafely depend and rely upon His Providence, that He who feeds the *Fowls of the Air*, and clothes even the *Lilies of the Field*, will much more take care of *Them*. Not in the way of *idleneſs* and *ſloth*: For *ſimilitudes* are not to be applied *literally*: But, in proportion to the natures of the things compared, he who provides for the *Fowls of the Air* and the *Lilies of the Field* in a way ſuitable to *Their* nature, will much more provide for *Men* in a way ſuitable to *Ours*: Either after a *ſuper-natural* manner, in ſuch *extraordinary* caſes as was that of the Apoſtle's Miſſion to preach the Goſpel; or elſe, in *ordinary* Caſes, by the *natural* means of Labour and Induſtry, whereby God has appointed that the Earth ſhall bring forth her increaſe. In the Uſe of which means, it is our Duty to rely upon Providence for his Bleſſing on the Effect. *If any would not work*, ſays St. *Paul*, *neither ſhould he eat*: And yet the ſame Apoſtle exhorts, *Phil.* iv. 6, *Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and ſupplication let your requeſts be made known unto God.* This is taking Thought for the things of the World, not as the *Gentiles* who know not God, but as thoſe who conſider that our *heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of all theſe things.*

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SERMON LXXV.

Of Forgiveneſs of Injuries.

EPHES. iv. 32. latter part.

Forgiving one another, even as God, for Chriſt's ſake, hath forgiven you.

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IT is the conſtant Method of St. *Paul* in all his Epiſtles, after he has finiſhed the *particular* Subject upon occaſion of which the Epiſtle was written, to add in the cloſe of his Diſcourſe ſuch *general* exhortations to the practice of Virtue, as might be of Uſe, not only in *That Age*, and to *That particular Church* to which the Epiſtle was written, but to *all Chriſtians* at *all times* and in *all places*; and might moſt effectually ſecure them againſt all ſuch corruptions either in Faith or Practice, as he foreſaw would be of the worſt conſequence in hindring the great Ends of the Goſpel of Chriſt. The Great and Principal Deſign of the Goſpel, is to reconcile men to *God*, and to *each Other*: to eſtabliſh in the World, upon the Foundation of a juſt regard to *God*, univerſal Peace and Love and Good-Will amongſt *Men*. The moſt dangerous Evil, and moſt deſtructive of this great Deſign of Chriſtianity, is mens ſuffering their *Paſſions* and *worldly Views* to intermix with their Religion. By which means, the very things which Religion

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was *chiefly* intended to *prevent*, are among ignorant and deluded men, following their *Paſſions* inſtead of their reaſon, *promoted principally* by what they take to be a ſtrong Concern for Religion itſelf. Hence *the Salt*, (as our Saviour in a moſt lively compariſon expreſſes this matter;) *the Salt*, *wherewith* things *ſhould be ſeaſoned*, does itſelf *loſe its Savour*. Hence *the Light*, (as he in another place moſt ſignificantly expreſſes the ſame thing;) *the* very *Light which is in* men, becomes *Darkneſs*: And *Satan*, on the contrary, is hereby *transformed into an Angel of Light*. *From whence* (ſays the Apoſtle St. *James*) *come wars and fightings among you*? that is, hatred, contentions and animoſities among Chriſtians? Come they from any real and ſerious Concern, for the Honour of *God* or for the Welfare of *Mankind*? No ſaith he, but *from your Luſts that war in your members*; that is, from your *Paſſions* and *Worldly Views*. This being ſo great and dangerous an Evil, and yet ſo very apt to ſpread among *all* Parties of Men; there is therefore no exhortation ſo often repeated, ſo perpetually inculcated, ſo conſtantly and earneſtly preſſed, in all the Books of the *New Teſtament*; as upon *This Head*, of the obligation Chriſtians are under to promote univerſal Love and Good-Will amongſt Men. With *This* the Apoſtle St. *Paul begins* the chapter, whereof my Text is a part: ver. 1; *I therefore the Priſoner of the Lord beſeech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called; With all lowlineſs and meekneſs, with long-ſuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* Arguments and *Motives* to *This*, he proceeds to alledge throughout the *Whole chapter*. And with *This* he at the end *concludes*, ver. 30; *Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are ſealed unto the day of redemption: Let all bitterneſs and wrath and anger and clamour and evil-ſpeaking be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven you.*

In diſcourſing more particularly upon which laſt words; *forgiving one another, even as God for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven you*: I ſhall endeavour to ſhow, 1*ſt*, that good Chriſtians *have their paſt Sins forgiven*; and that the original Ground and Motive of that Forgiveneſs, is the *Goodneſs of God: God has forgiven you.* 2*dly*, That the *particular Method*, in which the Goodneſs of God has thought fit to manifeſt itſelf in this Forgiveneſs of Sin, is through the *interceſſion of Chriſt*: *God, for* Chriſt's ſake, *has forgiven you.* 3*dly*, That the *Condition* of this Forgiveneſs through Chriſt, is the Suppoſition of *ſuch a Repentance*, the Fruit and Evidence whereof is our *Readineſs to forgive each other*: *Forgiving one another, even as God for Chriſt's ſake has forgiven you.*

1*ſt* and 2*d*; The *Two firſt* of theſe I ſhall conſider *Together*: That good Chriſtians *have their paſt Sins forgiven*; that the *original Ground or Motive* of that Forgiveneſs, is the eſſential and eternal *Goodneſs of God*; and that *the particular Method*, in which the Goodneſs of God has thought fit to manifeſt itſelf in this Forgiveneſs of Sin, is *through the interceſſion of Chriſt*. The Duty of rational creatures, who are made capable of diſcerning between Good and Evil; is to obey at all times the Commands of God. And whenſoever they knowingly and preſumptuouſly tranſgreſs againſt the Light he has given them, the natural and juſt Puniſhment of ſuch Tranſgreſſion is Death. Even upon *innocent* Beings, who may be ſuppoſed never to have tranſgreſſed at all, God is under *no obligation* to beſtow *immortality*. For He who has Power over all, may, without wrong to Any, do what he pleaſes with his own; and That *Life*, which to all the intelligent Beings in the Univerſe is originally his Free Gift, he may freely continue to any of them for what portion of time he pleaſes; and when their appointed period is run out, and they have enjoyed the Effects of his bountiful Goodneſs in their proper Share of Being, he may, even *without* conſideration of Sin, *again* as freely take it away. *Much more*, when rational Beings have *rebelled* againſt him, by preſumptuouſly tranſgreſſing the Laws of everlaſting righteouſneſs; may he juſtly cut them ſhort in diſpleaſure, and by an exemplary Sentence of righteous judgment, inflict upon them the *Puniſhment of Death*. For, what our Saviour declares in a *particular* caſe, that God could eaſily, if he pleaſed, deſtroy the whole nation of the impenitent *Jews*, and *raiſe up*, even *out of the Stones* of the Street, *children unto Abraham*; is no leſs true *univerſally*, that God can at any time deſtroy with exemplary Judgments

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ments *Any diſobedient Creatures*, and create to himſelf *Others*, with the ſame eaſe as he did *Them* at firſt, to undergo a new Probation of obedience. Nevertheleſs, from the conſideration of the divine *Goodneſs*, they who have formerly been diſobedient, and are now convinced of the unreaſonableneſs of being ſo, and are ſincerely reſolved to do what is right for the future; find a reaſonable ground and foundation of *Hope*, that God, in his great Forbearance, will ſtill make a further Trial of *Them*, and accept inſtead of Innocence their ſincere Amendment. And This, which, in the Arguments of Nature, is *but* Hope; is, in the declarations of the Goſpel, an aſſured Promiſe; that if a Sinner forſakes his unrighteous ways, and does for the Future That which is lawful and right, he *ſhall* ſave his Soul alive. The *original Ground* or *Motive* of this Forgiveneſs, is the eſſential *Goodneſs of God*. For He who has Power over all, may remit as much of his own Right as he pleaſes; and This, upon what Terms and Conditions he himſelf alone, who is under no controul, ſhall in his own divine wiſdom think fit to appoint and to accept. For if, even in *Human* Judicatures, a Judge is not to condemn, or to acquit, according to the Affections or Expectations of the Spectators, but according to his own more perfect Knowledge of the Law and of the *Fact*; much more is it reaſonable that *God*, whoſe Judgment is unerring, and his Knowledge infallible, ſhould *have mercy on whom he will have mercy*; *and compaſſion*, not arbitrarily, but *on whom he* himſelf ſees it fit to *have compaſſion*. By *original Right* therefore, God *may* appoint what Terms of Forgiveneſs he pleaſes. In *Fact*, the Method wherein the divine Goodneſs *has* thought fit *actually* to manifeſt itſelf in the Forgiveneſs of Sin, is *through the interceſſion of Chriſt*. *God, for* Chriſt's ſake, *has forgiven you*. Not that *God*, who, by the eſſential Rectitude of his Nature, acts always according to perfect Right and Reaſon; can be any way *changed*, or have any *affection moved* in him, by the interpoſition of any Interceſſor whatſoever: But that, being *of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, and intending to ſhow the greateſt poſſible diſcountenance to Sin in the very Method of forgiving it, he thought fit to annex the *Declarations of Pardon* to the *Death of the Mediator*. And therefore the words in the Text, which we render, *God* for Chriſt's ſake *has forgiven you*; are in the Original more accurate and expreſſive, *God hath forgiven you* in Chriſt; that is, he has in the diſpenſation and by the Terms of the Goſpel of Chriſt, declared his acceptance of your Repentance. From This conſideration, it is eaſy to give a ſatisfactory Anſwer to the Principal and moſt Material Objection of Unbelievers; who, in oppoſition to the Great Doctrine of the Goſpel, alledge, that God being always neceſſarily Omnipreſent, and conſequently *himſelf* at all times ready to hear the Prayers of all men, therefore there could be no need of appointing any *Mediator*; and that God being of himſelf, eſſentially in his nature, always diſpoſed to do what is right and fit, therefore his Purpoſes can no way be changed by the interpoſition of any *Interceſſor*: To This Objection, I ſay, it is eaſy, from what has been ſaid, to give a juſt and ſufficient Anſwer. For the Deſign of a Mediator or Interceſſor being appointed with God, was not as if God could be moved, as mortal men are, by *Perſwaſion* to do what otherwiſe he would not have thought right to be done: But the Deſign of it was, that God would teſtify his Hatred and Indignation againſt Sin, by conſigning the Pardon of it thro' the Blood of the *Mediator*. From hence alſo it appears, that as on the one hand the *interceſſion of Chriſt* is not at all of the leſs value, becauſe the eternal and eſſential *Goodneſs of God* was the original Ground or Motive of our obtaining Forgiveneſs *thro' That interceſſion*; ſo neither on the other hand is the *Goodneſs of God* leſs to be acknowledged, or the Pardon of Sin leſs *Free*, becauſe the *Method* in which God was pleaſed to manifeſt this Free Goodneſs was through the *interceſſion of Chriſt*. For he, who, in voluntary compliance with his Father's good pleaſure, laid down his life for the redemption and ſalvation of Men; did *himſelf* love us, and give himſelf for us, a ranſom and propitiation for Sin. And at the ſame time, He, who having Power over all, was pleaſed to appoint and accept on our behalf this interceſſion of his Son; may with as much Truth be affirmed to have forgiven us *Freely*, of his own *Grace and Goodneſs*, as if he had done it *without* any interceſſion at all. The Scripture always expreſſes this matter accurately, with great and exact diſtinctneſs, and with high acknowledgment of the original and eſſential *Goodneſs* of the

the God and Father of all. Our Saviour himſelf, *Joh.* iii. 16; *God* (ſays he) *ſo* SERM. *loved the World, that he* gave *his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him* LXXV. *ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.* And the Apoſtle St. *John* in like manner in his *1ſt epiſtle, ch.* iv. 9; *In This,* ſays he, *was manifeſted the Love of God towards us, becauſe that God* ſent *his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through Him.*

And This is a ſufficient Explication of the *two firſt particulars* I propoſed to diſcourſe upon from the Text; that good Chriſtians *have their paſt Sins forgiven*; that the *original Ground or Motive* of That Forgiveneſs, is the *Goodneſs of God*; and that the *particular Method*, in which the Goodneſs of God has thought fit to manifeſt itſelf in this Forgiveneſs of Sin, is *through the interceſſion of Chriſt.* The *Third* and *laſt* Obſervation was, that the *Condition* of this Forgiveneſs thro' Chriſt, is the Suppoſition of *ſuch a Repentance*, the Fruit and Evidence whereof is our *Readineſs to forgive each other: Forgiving one another, even as God for Chriſt's ſake has forgiven you.* In all Promiſes of Pardon, there is always, either expreſs'd or underſtood, a *Suppoſition of Repentance.* And by *Repentance*, is always meant, not a *bare Sorrow for Sin*; (for, *That* there cannot but be, even in the *Place of Torment*;) but by *True Repentance*, is always meant, an actual *Forſaking and Amending* of the Fault repented of. And not *That* only *in particular*; but it includes alſo that there be *in general* ſuch a diſpoſition of Mind, as *becomes* a penitent and forgiven Sinner: A diſpoſition of Mind, *deſirous* to ſhow forth the Sincerity of its Repentance by the Thankful Expreſſions of an *univerſal Obedience*, and by *imitation* of *Him* whom we adore for having forgiven us. One principal part of which imitation, is our being ready, upon all reaſonable occaſions, to forgive *Others*, even as *He* has freely forgiven *Us. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel againſt Any; even as Chriſt forgave you, ſo alſo do ye*; Col. iii. 13. And *Epheſ.* v. 2; *Walk in love, as Chriſt alſo has loved Us, and hath given himſelf for us an offering and a ſacrifice to God, for a ſweet-ſmelling ſavour.* To *God himſelf*, who is infinitely ſelf-ſufficient to his own Happineſs, we are capable of making no Recompence, no *Return, for all the Benefits that he has done unto us:* And therefore he is pleaſed to *accept* our kind and charitable behaviour towards *each other*, as a Regard paid immediately to *Him*; and he *requires* it of us, as the moſt proper and ſuitable Expreſſion of our having a due Senſe of *His* mercy and goodneſs towards us *all. If thy Brother treſpaſs againſt thee*, ſays our Saviour, *rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him: And if he treſpaſs againſt thee ſeven times in a day, and ſeven times in a day turn again to thee, ſaying, I repent; thou ſhalt forgive him*: Luke xvii. 4. Nay, St. *Matthew* adds, *not until ſeven times* only, *but until ſeventy times ſeven*; ch. xviii. 22. Nay, our Saviour carries this matter ſtill *further*; and, in imitation of *God* who *is kind to the unthankful and to the evil*, he commands us, *Matt.* v. 44; to *Love* even our *Enemies*, to *bleſs them that curſe* us, to *do good to them that hate* us, and to *pray for them which deſpitefully uſe* us, and *perſecute us.* Which Argument the Apoſtle St. *Peter* enforces from the example likewiſe of *Chriſt*; 1 *Pet.* iii. 9; *Not rendring evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwiſe Bleſſing*: As *Chriſt* did; *who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he ſuffered, he threatned not; but committed himſelf to Him that judgeth righteouſly.* The *Meaning* of all theſe and the like Precepts, is; *not* that Chriſtian *Magiſtrates* are to neglect the puniſhing of *Malefactors*; *not* that *Private* Chriſtians are to forbear bringing *publick Offenders* to Juſtice, *not* that it is not lawful for men to recover their *private juſt Dues* by ſuch Methods of *Law and Equity*, as are in wiſe and Chriſtian Countries appointed for the adminiſtration of Juſtice; nor, laſtly, that in *common life*, we are in *ſuch a ſenſe* to *forgive* thoſe who *continue* to wrong us, as that we needleſly and careleſly *truſt* them, and as it were *tempt* them to wrong us *more:* But we are to forgive, until ſeventy times ſeven, (that is, perpetually,) thoſe who *do repent*: And thoſe who *not repent*, but *perſiſt* in injuring us, we are to *pray for*, and be willing to do acts of *charity and humanity* to them when need requires; and not be ſollicitous for *Revenge*, but much rather to deſire their *Amendment*, and by all reaſonable Means promote reconciliation: And if at any time we are forced by the neceſſity of things, to have recourſe to the *Magiſtrate* to do us right; we are even *then* to deſire *only Equity* for *ourſelves*, and not *vexa-*

1 Pet. ii. 23.

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tion and *needleſs damage* to our *Adverſary*: In a word; it is the Duty of the Diſciples of Chriſt, to have *in general* a *kind and charitable diſpoſition*; dealing with *Others* in all caſes, and in all Circumſtances, as we deſire and in our daily Petitions are taught to pray, that God would be pleaſed to deal with *Us*.

In *This* ſenſe, and according to *This* explication of the nature and limitations of the Duty of Forgiveneſs, the *Practice of it* may be enforced upon all *reaſonable* perſons by many *ſtrong Arguments* and moſt *powerful Motives*. It is *equitable* in the *nature of things*, that men conſcious of their own Frailneſs, ſenſible of their own Weakneſſes and Paſſions, and of their Aptneſs to be too ſoon and too often provoked; ſhould be very ready to forgive and be reconciled to *Others*, *conſidering* (as the Apoſtle St. *Paul* argues upon another occaſion; *conſidering*) Themſelves, *leſt* They *alſo be tempted*. It is *deſirable* for the *inward Peace and Eaſe* of mens *own Minds within themſelves*, that they ſhould not be under the Power of *fretful Paſſions*, and the *laſting Reſentments* of a revengeful Spirit; but that they be meek and gentle, peaceable and eaſy to be reconciled: Which Sweetneſs of Diſpoſition, improved upon religious Principles into a Habit of Meekneſs, is a Virtue reflecting *upon itſelf*; That calm and ſedate Satisfaction, which is in a *peculiar manner* a Reward to itſelf. Nor is it leſs *beneficial to the Publick*; as being the great *Preſervative* againſt that *Beginning of Strife*, which *Solomon* elegantly compares to the *letting out of Water*, Prov. xvii. 14; that is, it is the Opening of a Breach which no man can be ſure to ſtop, before it proceeds to the fatalleſt and moſt calamitous events. Upon which account, excellent is the Advice of the Author of the Book of *Eccleſiaſticus*, ch. xix. 13; *Admoniſh a friend; it may be he hath not done it; and if he have done it, that he do it no more. Admoniſh thy friend; it may be he hath not ſaid it, and if he have, that he ſpeak it not again. — There is one that ſlippeth in his Speech, but not from his heart; and who is he that hath not offended with his Tongue?*

There is, further, *another Motive* to the Practice of this Duty, urged by the Apoſtle St. *Paul*, that it is really the *moſt effectual* way, finally and upon the whole, of *doing ourſelves right*; Rom. xii. 19; *Dearly beloved, avenge not your ſelves; — for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, ſaith the Lord: Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirſt, give him drink; for in ſo doing, thou ſhalt heap coals of Fire on his Head: Be not overcome of evil; but overcome evil with good.* The Meaning is: Gentleneſs and Meekneſs and Eaſineſs to forgive, is the moſt probable way of *working upon men*, if they be at all reaſonable and capable of Amendment; and if on the contrary they be altogether incorrigible, then it is the certain and effectual Means of having *God* finally judge our cauſe. That This Phraſe, *heaping coals of Fire upon his Head*, ſignifies the *Judgments of God* falling finally upon thoſe, who maliciouſly and incorrigibly perſiſt in oppreſſing ſuch meek and charitable perſons, as never gave them any juſt Provocation; is evident from the preceding words, *Vengeance is mine, ſaith the Lord*: And from the manner in which the whole Paſſage is expreſſed in the Place from whence St. *Paul* cites it, *Prov.* xxv. 21; *If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirſty, give him water to drink: For thou ſhalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord ſhall reward* Thee: And from the *other* paſſages of Scripture, in which the very ſame phraſe is uſed; *Pſ.* cxl. 10; *Let burning coals fall upon them*; And *Iſ.* xlvii. 14; (according to the Verſion of the lxx,) *They ſhall be as ſtubble, the Fire ſhall burn them; — for thou haſt coals of fire to heap upon them:* And 2 *Eſdr.* xvi. 53; *Let not the Sinner ſay that he hath not ſinned; for God ſhall burn coals of fire upon* His *Head, who ſaith before the Lord God and his glory, I have not ſinned.*

But, to draw towards a concluſion. The *laſt* and *moſt powerful Motive* to the Practice of the Duty before us, is the Argument urged in the Text; that God expects and requires it of us in the Conditions of the Goſpel, that we ſhould *forgive one another, even as He, for Chriſt's ſake, has forgiven Us*. The *Reaſonableneſs* of the condition, is well expreſſed by the Author of the book of *Eccleſiaſticus*, ch. xxviii. 1; *He that revengeth, ſhall find vengeance from the Lord, and he will ſurely keep his Sins in remembrance. Forgive thy neighbour the hurt that he has done thee; ſo ſhall Thy Sins alſo be forgiven when thou prayeſt. One man beareth Hatred againſt another, and doth he ſeek pardon from the Lord? He ſheweth no mercy to a Man which is like himſelf; and doth he ask forgiveneſs of his Own Sins?* What is *here* argued as

equitable

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equitable in the *nature of the Thing*, is by the *Apoſtle* declared to be the *Condition of the Goſpel*; Jam. ii. 13; *He ſhall have judgment without mercy, that hath ſhewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth againſt Judgment.* Our Lord himſelf in That Prayer which he taught his Diſciples, commanded them to ſay; *Forgive Us* Our *Treſpaſſes*, in like manner *as* we *forgive them that treſpaſs againſt* Us: And at the Concluſion of the Prayer, he enlarges upon the *reaſon* of that petition; *For*, (ſays he) *if* ye *forgive men* Their *Treſpaſſes, your heavenly Father will alſo forgive* you; *But if* ye *forgive not men* their *Treſpaſſes, neither will your Father forgive* your *Treſpaſſes.* The ſame thing he inculcates in the parable of the King, who having forgiven a Servant ten thouſand Talents, revoked the Favour again, upon That Servant's refuſing to forgive his fellow-ſervant one hundred pence, *Matt.* xviii. 33; *ſhouldſt not thou alſo have had compaſſion on thy fellow-ſervant, even as I had pity on thee?* Nay, ſo far does our Saviour carry this matter, as to adviſe *Matt.* v. 23; *If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembreſt that thy Brother hath ought againſt thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, firſt be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

SERMON

SERMON LXXVI.

Of the Nature and End of the Sabbath.

MAR. ii. 27.

And he ſaid unto them, The Sabbath *was made for Man, and not Man for the* Sabbath.

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IT is very remarkable, in the whole Hiſtory of our Saviour, that in all caſes where neither any *natural neceſſity* nor *moral obligation* intervened to the contrary, *there* he was conſtantly moſt exact and nice, in fulfilling *every particular* even of the *ceremonial* Law. Thus when he came to *John the Baptiſt*; though, having no Sin, he had no need of the Baptiſm of Repentance; and *John* accordingly *forbad him, ſaying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comeſt Thou to Me?* yet he *inſiſted* upon it, ſaying, *ſuffer it to be ſo Now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all Righteouſneſs*; Matt. iii. 15. But, on the contrary, *whereever* any *real neceſſity of Nature*, or any *moral Obligation*, any Work of *Goodneſs, Mercy* or *Charity*, came in competition, *there* he was always as zealous, that the work of *Goodneſs* or *Charity* ſhould take place of *any poſitive rite* or *ceremony* whatſoever. Thus when the Phariſees reproached him, for converſing familiarly with, and inſtructing, perſons legally unclean; he replies,

Matt.

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Matt. ix. 13; *Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have Mercy and not Sacrifice.* And when the Ruler of the Synagogue reviled him for healing a diſeaſed perſon upon the Sabbath-day, and maliciouſly repreſented it to the people as a Breach of the Command given to keep That day Holy; he anſwers him, *Luke* xiii. 15; *Thou Hypocrite, Doth not each one of you on the Sabbath looſe his Ox or his Aſs from the Stall, and lead him away to watering? and ought not this Woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound, lo, theſe eighteen years, be looſed from this Bond on the Sabbath-day?* And, in the Hiſtory which occaſioned the words of my Text; when the Phariſees were angry at Jeſus's Diſciples, for plucking a few ears of Corn on the Sabbath-day, *Mar.* ii. 24; our Lord anſwers them by giving an Inſtance out of the Hiſtory of the *Old Teſtament*, by which it appeared that *in all times* even under the Law, all *merely ritual* and *ceremonial inſtitutions* always gave place to the *juſt and real Neceſſities* of Life. Immediately after which, he adds in the words of the Text, as a *general Ground* or *Reaſon* of the thing it ſelf, whereof he had juſt before alledged an *Inſtance in Practice*; The *Sabbath*, ſaith he, *was made for Man, and not Man for the Sabbath.* That is: Duties of a *ritual* nature, and of *poſitive* appointment only, do not, like thoſe Moral Virtues, which are of *intrinſick, eternal*, and *unalterable* obligation, indiſpenſably oblige in *all Caſes* and in *all Circumſtances* whatſoever; but were appointed of God, only for the preſent Uſe of Man, to be ſubſervient and aſſiſting to the more convenient Practice of the Great Duties of Religion.

From theſe words therefore of our Saviour, I ſhall in the following Diſcourſe conſider the *Nature and Euds* of the *original inſtitution* of the *Sabbath*, and *to what Degrees and Purpoſes* it *ſtill* continues *obligatory* among *Chriſtians*. In general: As it is abſolutely neceſſary in the firſt Foundation of Religion, that we know diſtinctly *Whom* we are to worſhip, and in *what manner*; ſo it is neceſſary likewiſe in the Nature of things, that ſome *Portion* of *Time* be allowed for *inſtructing* our ſelves in the *Knowledge* of our Duty, and for the *Practice* peculiarly of That eſpecial part of it, which conſiſts in the *publick Acknowledgment* and ſolemn *Worſhip* of *God*. And *herein* conſiſts the *general Morality* of the Sabbath, and the *eternal Reaſon* of its having perpetually a place among the unalterable Commandments of the Moral Law. For as neceſſary as it is, that *Religion* ſhould be *at all* preſerved in the World, ſo neceſſary it is that *ſome Time* ſhould be ſet apart for mens *inſtruction* in the *Will* of God, and for their *ſolemnizing* his *Worſhip*.

But to be *more diſtinct* and *particular*: The *Ends* for which the Sabbath was *originally* inſtituted, and for which the Command was from time to time *renewed*; were principally as follows.

1ſt; That men might continually commemorate the works of *Creation*, and acknowledging the *One True God* and *Author of all things*, might praiſe him perpetually for the things that he has made. *Rev.* iv. 11; The Worſhip paid to God *in Heaven* is thus repreſented to St. *John* in his Viſion; The whole multitude of the heavenly hoſt fall down before him that ſits on the Throne, ſaying, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; For thou haſt created all things, and for thy Pleaſure they Are, and were created.* This is the employment of Saints and Angels, in the *eternal Sabbath* in *Heaven*; And that, upon *Earth*, the Praiſes of God may be celebrated on the ſame account is the original Foundation of the inſtitution of the *Sabbath*. Gen. ii. 3; *And God bleſſed the ſeventh day and ſanctified it; becauſe that in it he had reſted from all his work, which God created and made.* Which reaſon is again repeated, *Exod.* xx. 11; *For in ſix days the Lord made Heaven and Earth, and the Sea, and all that in them is, and reſted the ſeventh day; wherefore the Lord bleſſed the Sabbath-day and hallowed it.* It is here to be obſerved, that the word, *reſted*, is by no means to be underſtood *literally*, as if the Creating of things had been any *Pains* or *Labour* to God: For it is *abſurd*, that any thing ſhould give any *Trouble* to *Omnipotence*. *By the* Word *of the Lord were the Heavens made, and all the Hoſt of them by the Breath of his Mouth. He* ſpake *the word, and they were made; he* commanded, *and they ſtood faſt.* The Meaning is: He made them all with as great Eaſe, as if it had been no Action at all, but merely a word ſpeaking. His *Reſting* therefore after it, is (I ſay) by no means to be underſtood literally; But God's *reſting*, ſignifies merely, that the things were *finiſhed* which he intended to

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make at That time, and that he *Then* proceeded no further. Likewiſe, things being made in *ſix days*, is not, that there was any thing in the Nature of Things, which *required* That *Space* of Time for their Productions. For the Production of Things in *ſix days*, is as *miraculous*, as the producing of them in *one ſingle moment*; and the producing of them in *one moment*, had been juſt as eaſy to *God*, as the creating them in *ſix days*. But it is only for the ſake of *Our* greater *diſtinctneſs of Conception*, that things were digeſted in That particular Order and *Portion of Time*. And our perpetual Returns of Praiſes to God for the things that he has made, offered up to him every Sabbath, are a *Mark* or diſtinguiſhing *Character* of the Worſhippers of the *True God*; a *declaration* or *continual profeſſing* of ourſelves to be Servants of the *One Almighty and true God*, the *Father or Author of all things*, the *Maker of Heaven and Earth*: in oppoſition to the *Infidelity of Atheiſts*, the *Superſtition* of *Polytheiſts*, and the *irreligious Worſhip* of all the *idolatrous Nations* of the Earth. *Exod* xxxi. 13, 17; *Verily my Sabbaths ye ſhall keep*; *For it is a* Sign *between Me and You*,——*that ye may know that I am the Lord*;——*It is a* Sign *between Me and the children of Iſrael for ever*; *For in ſix days the Lord made Heaven and Earth*. Of *ignorant* and *profane* men, *Some* have imagined the World to exiſt by *Neceſſity of Nature*; not conſidering, that in what ariſes from *neceſſity*, there can be *no variety* or *diſtinction*: And *theſe* perſons, cannot but be *totally void* of *all Religion*. *Others* have fancied the World to have been framed originally by *mere Chance*; not conſidering, that Chance *is nothing*, and can *do nothing*, being a mere *empty Word* or *Sound*: And *theſe* likewiſe, muſt needs be abſolutely *without Religion*. *Others* have perſuaded themſelves, that the *Sun*, *Moon*, and *Stars*, were *Gods*, or the *Habitations of Gods*, or the *Powers that governed the World*: And *Theſe* were the idolatrous Worſhippers of the *Hoſt of Heaven*. Concerning which Crime, *Job* thus expreſſes himſelf with his accuſtomed Eloquence, ch. xxxi. 26; *If I beheld the Sun when it ſhined, or the Moon walking in brightneſs; and my heart hath been ſecretly enticed, or my Mouth hath kiſs'd my hand; This alſo were an iniquity to be puniſhed by the Judge, for I ſhould have denied the God that is above*. The Great *Preſervative* againſt every Fault of this kind, either *idolatrous* or *atheiſtical*; is the conſideration that the *Whole Univerſe*, and *all things therein contained*, are the *Creation* of God; That the *Moon and Stars themſelves*, are all of them the *work* of *his hands*; and that it is our *heavenly Father* which *cauſeth* His *Sun* (ſo our Saviour emphatically expreſſes it,) he *cauſeth* His *Sun to ſhine on the Evil and on the Good, and ſendeth Rain on the Juſt and on the Unjuſt*. This is, what even by *Reaſon it ſelf* may be ſtrictly proved, to thoſe who are capable of attending to it: *His eternal Power and Godhead, are clearly ſeen by the things that are made*; Rom. i. 20. By *Revelation*, the ſame Great Truth is clearly confirmed to perſons of all Capacities. And the firſt inſtitution of the *Sabbath*, was on purpoſe, that men periodically celebrating the *Creation of God*, might thereby be preſerved from *irreligion and idolatry*. Deut. iv. 19; *Leſt thou lift up thine eyes unto Heaven, and when thou ſeeſt the Sun and the Moon and the Stars, even all the Hoſt of Heaven, ſhouldſt be driven to worſhip them and ſerve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all Nations under the whole Heaven*. This was the Idolatry Mankind was apt to run into, in the *early* Ages of the World; and it continues *ſtill* among ſome *barbarous* Nations even at *This day*. But the *more prevailing* Vice in theſe *latter* Ages, among men of *corrupt Minds* in *civilized* Nations; are *Atheiſtical Notions*, of *Neceſſity*, *Fate*, *and Nature*. The *proper Remedy* againſt *Both* theſe *Great Evils*, of *Idolatry* and *Atheiſm*; is a ſerious conſideration of the *manifold Wiſdom* and *Excellency* of the *Works of God*, which ſhow forth the *Praiſe* and *Glory* of their *Almighty Creator*. *O all ye works of the Lord, bleſs ye the Lord, praiſe him and magnify him for ever*. Pſ. cxlviii. 3; *Praiſe ye him, Sun and Moon; praiſe ye him, all ye Stars of Light*;——*Mountains and all Hills*;——*Beaſts and all Cattle*;——*Fire and hail, ſnow and vapour, ſtorms and wind fulfilling his Word*. It is a very elegant, and *expreſſive* Figure of Speech; to repreſent All, even *inanimate* creatures, as *Themſelves* praiſing God; becauſe the *contemplation* of them affords to reaſonable *Men*, perpetual *Grounds* of Praiſing him. I have been the longer upon this *Firſt* Head, becauſe This *original* reaſon of the inſtitution of the Sabbath, is of *eternal* and *unchangeable* Conſideration.

2dly;

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2*dly*; Another reaſon, which was *added* upon occaſion of *renewing* this inſtitution to the *Jews*, was that they might *commemorate* their Deliverance out of the Land of *Egypt*, which to *That People* was as it were a *New Creation*. Deut. v. 15; *Remember that thou waſt a Servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord brought thee out thence by a ſtretched-out arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day*. This *additional reaſon*, was *peculiar* to the nation of the *Jews only*; and conſequently ſo were the *additional Circumſtances*, which were then annexed, with regard to the *Manner* of performing the Duty. Of which kind, was that *abſolute* and *ſtrict Reſt* from *every ſort* of *Work* whatſoever, which was a proper commemoration of their deliverance from that Great Bondage, wherein they had in an unparallelled manner been obliged to *work* and to *ſerve with rigour*. And becauſe 'twas a Manifeſt *Contempt* of This *Great Deliverance*, and a *preſumptuouſly wilful deſpiſing* of a *plain Command* of God, then immediately and expreſly given to That People; *therefore*, however ſmall the *Offence* may ſeem as to the *Matter* of it, yet (which is always the main Circumſtance of aggravation,) it being altogether inexcuſable in point of *wilful preſumption*, the Man in the Wilderneſs who did but *gather ſticks upon the Sabbath-day*, was by God's eſpecial direction commanded to be put to death; *Num.* xv. 35. It was a *preſumptuous Contempt* of That *expreſs* part of the Command given at That time to That people; *Exod.* xxxv. 3, 2; *Ye ſhall kindle no Fire throughout your Habitations upon the Sabbath-day; whoſoever doth work therein, ſhall be put to death*. But this *rigorous* exacting of an *abſolute* and *ſtrict Reſt*, was, as I have ſaid, *peculiar* to the nation of the *Jews only*: As is evident from the *Reaſon* before-mentioned, relating to their deliverance out of *Egypt*; and is ſtill more clear from the words of St. *Paul*, Col. ii. 16; *Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in reſpect of the new-moon or of the* Sabbath-day; *Which are a* Shadow *of things to come, but the Body* (or Subſtance) *is of Chriſt*: And from the words of our Saviour himſelf, immediately following the Text; *The Son of man, is Lord alſo of the Sabbath*.

3*dly*; Another *additional* Reaſon, upon *renewing* the inſtitution of the Sabbath to the *Jews*, was, that *Servants*, and even *Cattle appointed for Labour*, might have a proportionable time of *Reſt*. *This* reaſon is expreſſed in the *fourth* Commandment; And again more particularly, *Exod.* xxiii. 12; *that thine ox and thine aſs may reſt, and the Son of thine handmaid, and the ſtranger may be refreſhed*. And *This* reaſon, is *partly* ceremonial, *partly* moral. So far as the Commandment of giving Reſt to *Servants*, was a *Memorial* to the *Iſraelites* of their having been *themſelves* Servants in *Egypt*; ſo far it was part of the *ritual* Law, and its obligation extends not to other Nations. But ſo far as the *reaſon* of the commandment is founded in *humanity*, and is oppoſite to *cruelty*, *ſeverity*, and *rigour*; ſo far it is an *eternal* part of the *moral* Law, and continues to be of *perpetual* obligation. Unreaſonable *Severity*, in exacting from thoſe under our Power, more than they are well able to perform; is for ever a Breach of this Commandment, and a Temper altogether inconſiſtent with the Spirit and Character of a good man. *A righteous man*, ſaith the Scripture, *regardeth the Life* even *of his Beaſt*; Prov. xii. 10. And it is not without its proper Significancy, in order to ſhow men what Spirit and Temper they ſhould be of; that God, in the giving of this Commandment, condeſcends to make mention even of *Cattle*; and that our Saviour aſſures us, that not a *Sparrow* falls to the ground, without the Notice of our Father which is in Heaven.

And now from This Account of the *Reaſons* of the *original Inſtitution*, and of the *repeated Renewals* of the Command concerning the *Sabbath*; it is very eaſy to underſtand, *how far* and in *what ſenſe* it is a *perpetual* Commandment, and to *what Degrees* and *Purpoſes* it *ſtill* continues *obligatory* among *Chriſtians*.

The *moral* part of the Sabbath; that is, *ſo far* as it is a Commandment enjoining the virtue of *humanity*, or of allowing time to thoſe who are under our Power, to *reſt* from the *Labours* of their worldly employment; and *ſo far* as it is, according to the *original* reaſon of its inſtitution in Paradiſe, a time ſet apart for the *religious commemorating of God's work of Creation*, and *praiſing* him for the things that he has made, and *ſerving and worſhipping* him as the Maker of all things; this *moral* part (I ſay) of the Sabbath is of *eternal* and *unchangeable Obligation*. For the *ſolemn Publick Worſhip* of God cannot poſſibly be performed, without *particular Times* be ſet apart

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apart for the performing it, and for the inſtructing men in the Knowledge of their Duty. The more carefully this is done, the more acceptable to God are our days of devotion. And they who by the *habitual* Practice of Virtue, preſerve *conſtantly* upon their Minds a Senſe of God and Religion in *all* the actions of their Lives; may be truly ſaid, in the *Chriſtian* ſenſe, to keep a *perpetual* Sabbath. Upon which Account, both the *Land of Canaan*, wherein the *Iſraelites* were to ſerve God *without fear, in holineſs and righteouſneſs before him* all *the days of their lives*; and the *heavenly Canaan*, whereof the other was but a Type; are by St. *Paul* figuratively repreſented under the Notion of an eternal *Sabbath* or *Reſt* to the people of God, in a very *elegant alluſion:* Without attending to which, there is conſiderable difficulty in underſtanding the manner both of his expreſſion and argument: *Heb.* iv. 3; *Although* (ſaith he) *the works*, the works of Creation, *were finiſhed from the foundation of the World, —— and God did* reſt *the ſeventh day from all his works*; yet This was not the True Sabbath, (but only as he elſewhere expreſſes it, *Col.* ii. 17; *it was a ſhadow of things to come:*) The True Sabbath or *Reſt*, to the people of the *Jews*, was their entring into the *Promiſed Land*, and *Therein* reſting *for ever* from the labours they had underwent in *Egypt* and in the Wilderneſs: And This, he tells us, is the ſenſe of the word, *Reſt*, in thoſe places, where God threatned and *ſware* to the unbelieving Iſraelites, *that they ſhould not enter into his Reſt*; ch. iii. 11, 18. But then ſtill he goes on, and tells us further, that even This final Reſt of Theirs, *the promiſed Land it ſelf*; even *This* alſo was ſtill but a Type of a *further* and better *Reſt*, even the *eternal Sabbath in Heaven:* For if *Joſhua*, ſays he, (ch. iv. 8, 7,) *had given them Reſt, then would not* the Scripture *afterward have ſpoken of* another *day*, as it does *in David*, ſaying *Again, To day, after ſo long a time. There remaineth therefore* (infers the Apoſtle) *there remaineth* ſtill *a further Reſt* (or Sabbath) *to the People of God*, ver. 9; that is, an eternal Reſt in Heaven, from Sin, and from Temptation, and from all Miſery. For ſo he goes on, ver. 10; *For He that is entred into his Reſt, He alſo has ceaſed from his own works, as God did from His: Let us labour therefore to enter into That Reſt, leſt any man fall after the ſame example of Unbelief.* By attending to, and obſerving This *Alluſion*, there is very great Light given to the Apoſtle's *whole* Diſcourſe in That 4th Chapter to the *Hebrews*, which otherwiſe is difficult to be diſtinctly and clearly underſtood. But to proceed.

As the *Moral* part of the Commandment concerning the Sabbath, is of *perpetual* obligation; ſo the *ritual* or *inſtituted* part, which had relation (as a *particular* Memorial) to the Deliverance of the *Jews* out of *Egypt*, is aboliſhed by the Goſpel. Inſomuch that St. *Paul*, in the place before-cited, *Col.* iii. 16, 17; among *ordinances* of *meats* and *drinks*, and *new-moons*, and other *ſhadows of things to come*, reckons up alſo the *Sabbath-days*. But then, inſtead of the *Jewiſh* Sabbath, there ſucceeded, by the Appointment and Practice of the Apoſtles, the commemoration of our Lord's *Reſurrection*. Which coming to paſs upon the *firſt* day of the Week, the Chriſtian *Lord's day*, inſtead of the *ſeventh* which was the *Jewiſh* Sabbath; it was accordingly from thenceforth kept on the *firſt day of the Week*. Thus we read, *Acts* xx. 7; that *upon the* firſt *day of the Week, when the Diſciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.* And 1 *Cor.* xvi. 1, 2; *Concerning the Collection for the Saints;* —*upon the* firſt *day of the week*, ſaith he, *let every one of you lay by him in ſtore, as God has proſpered him.* And *Rev.* i. 10; it is, by St. *John*, expreſſed by *Name: I was*, ſaith he, *in the Spirit on the Lord's day.*

The *Manner*, in which it ought to be obſerved among *Chriſtians*, is, in attending the Publick Worſhip of God, in hearing the Word, in reading the Scriptures; in inſtructing and aſſiſting thoſe, over whom we have any kind of influence, in the Knowledge and Practice of their Duty. In a word, it is to be ſpent in works of *Neceſſity*, and in works of *Charity*; and in whatſoever tends, without Superſtition and without Affectation, to the real Honour of God, and to the true Intereſt and Promoting of Religion and Virtue in the World. Concerning works of *Neceſſity*; our Saviour in the Text, upon occaſion of his Diſciples plucking the Ears of Corn on the Sabbath-day, expreſly exempts us from the Preciſeneſs of the Phariſaical hypocriſy: *The Sabbath*, ſaith he, *was made for Man, and not Man for the Sabbath.* Concerning works of *Charity*; theſe are ſo direct and proper, ſo great

great and principal a part of true Religion, that, as if it were *on purpoſe* to ſhow theſe to be even the *moſt acceptable* part of That Reſt which God commanded on the Sabbath, our Saviour ſeems, in the whole courſe of his Miniſtry, to have induſtriouſly as it were *ſought for* all poſſible occaſions of doing things of *This nature* upon the Sabbath-day, that he might thence take opportunity to reprove the falſe Notions which the Phariſees had entertained, both of *God*'s reſting from *His* work, and of his commanding *Them* to reſt from *Theirs*. The careful obſerving of which matter, will clear to us the Senſe of an *expreſſion* of our Saviour, which otherwiſe is not obvious to be underſtood. When the *Jews* ſought to ſlay him, becauſe he had healed a lame man on the Sabbath-day; the Reply he makes to them, is This, *Joh.* v. 17; *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.* His meaning is: *Ye have a very wrong notion of the true Sabbatical Reſt which God has commanded: From his work of* Creation, *God* does indeed *Now reſt*; *but in Acts of* Providence, Preſervation, Government, *and* doing Good *to his Creatures, in* Theſe *things* My Father worketh Hitherto, *and* will *work* for ever; *And in* theſe *inſtances* I *alſo work*, *and* every good *man works*, *both on the* Sabbath-day *and* continually. SERM. LXXVI.

The *Extremes* to be avoided, are; An affected Judaical or Phariſaical *Preciſeneſs* on the *one* hand, which uſually proceeds either from *hypocriſy*, or from *want of underſtanding rightly the true Nature of religion:* And on the *other* hand, the *worſe* and *more dangerous* Extreme, is, That Habit of ſpending any part of the Lord's day in *Looſeneſs* and *Idleneſs*, in *Gaming* and *Debauchery*, which has been encouraged by *Popery*, and which has, to ſo *Many* perſons, been the *corruption* of their *Principles*, and the entire *Ruin* of their *Morals*. *From which and all other*, &c.

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The Parable of the Sower explained.

St. Luke viii. 15.

But that on the good ground, are they, which in an honeſt and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with Patience.

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THESE Words are part of that Explication of the Parable of the Sower, which our Saviour was pleaſed to give to his Diſciples in private, after he had ſpoken the Parable it ſelf publickly in the hearing of the Multitude, without interpreting it to *Them* at all. The *Reaſons* of his making which great Difference between his Diſciples and the reſt of the People, were theſe two. *1ſt*, Becauſe the Diſciples were intended by our Saviour to be preachers of the word, to teach and explain it to *others*; and therefore it was very neceſſary that they ſhould firſt be fully and particularly inſtructed, to underſtand every thing

thing distinctly *themselves*. This Reason we find our Saviour giving, St. *Matt.* xiii. 51: where the Evangelist relating the same History of our Saviour's explaining this and some other Parables to his Disciples in private, adds at the conclusion, ver. 51: *Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea Lord: Then said he unto them, Therefore every Scribe which is instructed into the Kingdom of Heaven, is like unto a man that is an housholder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old:* That is; He had given them these particular Instructions, expecting they should take care so to lay up his Doctrines in their Minds, as that they might be thoroughly qualified to be successful Preachers of the Gospel, and be able upon all Occasions to bring forth out of their Memory, as out of a well-furnished Store-house, instructions suited to Persons of all Capacities. So that those who at present had not these things explained to them, might afterwards, as many of them as were capable, come to receive instruction from the Disciples, who were sent forth into the World for that very End. The *other* Reason of our Saviour's making so great a difference between his Disciples and the Multitude, in explaining all things distinctly to the one, and speaking to the other in parables without the interpretation; was the unworthiness and incapacity, at present, of the greater part of the mixt multitude, to hear and judge of his Doctrine. This Reason we find our Saviour giving, in the words a little before the Text; where, upon his Disciples asking him the meaning of the Parable, he introduces his explication with these words, ver. 10; *Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.* Which words at first Sight, may seem to ascribe the cause of this different treatment, not to the different Qualifications of the Persons, but merely to the absolute Will of God, whose pleasure it was to have it so; Which would be very difficult to reconcile with the Attributes of God, who declares himself to be no respecter of Persons. But in the xiii*th* chapter of St. *Matthew*, where the same History is again related, we find the same words set down more at large, and explained so, as clearly to lay the blame upon the Persons themselves, and not upon any unwillingness in God to assist them: ver. 10; *The Disciples came and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto Them in parables? He answered, and said unto them, Because it is given unto You to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to Them it is not given: For, whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even That he hath: Therefore speak I to Them in parables, because they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand:* That is, to the Disciples who attended to, and considered, and were desirous to practise his Doctrine, he continually explained things more and more; *to you that hear, shall more be given,* as St. *Mark* expresses it; but the careless and prejudiced multitude, were neither worthy nor capable of such instruction; And then he adds, ver. 14; *And in Them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; For this peoples heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.* In this larger and fuller account of the words, given by St. *Matthew*, the defect appears plainly to be only in the people themselves: God, is always ready to heal them upon their Conversion; but they themselves are careless, and desire not to be converted; and the Prophecy is not a declaration of what God chooses to do on *his* part, but a Complaint of the peoples carelessness, incapacity, and unworthiness *to receive our Lord's instruction.* And in this Sense we find St. *Paul* expressly interpreting the same Prophetical words, *Acts* xxviii. 25; when, upon the *Jews* neglecting and obstinately refusing to attend his preaching of the Gospel at *Rome*; after much patience, he at length left them, with this protestation; *Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the Prophet, unto our Fathers, saying, Go unto this people and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive.* So that our Saviour's forbearing to explain the Parable to the multitude, must by no means be understood

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ſtood as proceeding from any unwillingneſs in *Him* to give them all neceſſary inſtruction; but it was plainly only his putting in Practice that Rule himſelf, which he afterwards gave in direction to his Diſciples, that they ſhould not *caſt their Pearls before Swine*, that is, before prejudiced and unworthy perſons; leſt thereby they ſhould expoſe *Themſelves* to injuries, and their *Doctrine* to contempt. It is the very ſame caſe, as in the inſtance of his forbearing to work Miracles in his own Country; Not that he was more unwilling to convert thoſe of his own Country than others; but becauſe the unreaſonable Prejudices and Obſtinacy of thoſe particular perſons made *Them* unworthy, and would have rendred the *Miracles themſelves* uſeleſs. This ſeems to be the true account of our Saviour's forbearing to interpret the Parable to the Multitude; and it ſhows how dangerous a thing it is, to raiſe Doctrines from particular and ſingle Texts of Scripture, without comparing them with other parallel places, which more fully repreſent the ſame ſenſe under different Expreſſions.

The Parable itſelf, of which the Text is part of the Explication, is a lively deſcription of the nature and manner of the Preaching of the Goſpel, and of the different Effects that the Doctrine of Chriſt has upon different Perſons, according to their different Tempers, Diſpoſitions, and Qualifications. God ſent his Son into the World, to the intent that All men through him might be ſaved, and come to the knowledge of the Truth: Accordingly our Saviour ſent forth his Diſciples with an univerſal Commiſſion, *Go ye into all the earth, and preach the Goſpel to every creature.* This is repreſented by a *Sower*'s going forth to ſow his ſeed, and ſcattering it in *variety* of Places. (The Similitude is ſuited to the Capacity of the vulgar, and agreeable to the uſual method of inſtruction in the *Jewiſh* Nation; that thoſe among the multitude, who were well-diſpoſed, might conſider and enquire and be informed in the Doctrine by Degrees; at the ſame time that the careleſs and unattentive, remained wholly ignorant; and they who were prejudiced and deſigned to cavil, might have no handle to do it.) Now, according to the intent of the Parable; Among Them who hear the preaching of the Goſpel, there is great diverſity; and the Effect it has upon them, according to their different tempers, is likewiſe very different. Some hear or read the Goſpel with ſo little regard and attention, that it makes no impreſſion at all upon their minds, but they immediately forget it; and though their own Vices be particularly deſcribed, and the danger of them ſhown, yet they never make the application to themſelves, but, as St. *James* expreſſes it, ch. i. ver. 23, are *like unto a Man beholding his natural face in a glaſs, who beholdeth himſelf, and goeth his way, and ſtraightway forgetteth what manner of man he was:* Theſe perſons our Saviour compares to the way-ſide, the beaten road, into which the Seed that fell upon it never entred at all, but was either trodden under Feet and deſtroyed by them that paſſed over it, or elſe was picked up by the Birds of the Air. Others, when they hear the Goſpel preached, are indeed at firſt moved by it with ſome warmth of Devotion, and embrace it chearfully; but, having no wiſe and ſettled Reſolutions, no firmneſs and conſtancy of Mind; upon the firſt Difficulties and Temptations that aſſault them, they very quickly fall away: Theſe our Saviour deſcribes under the notion of ſtony or rocky ground, where the Earth being very thin, and ſhallow, the Seed that fell into it ſoon ſprang up in-

Exe. xxxiii. 31.

deed, but, for want of moiſture and depth to take root, as ſoon as the Sun ſhined hot, it withered away. Others, when the Goſpel is preached to them, are convinced of the Truth and Reaſonableneſs of the Doctrine, and, as often as they are exhorted to it, make ſome ſlight reſolutions of obeying and living up to it: But the perpetually returning Cares and Buſineſs, the Covetouſneſs, the Ambition and the Pleaſures of the World, do ſo wholly take up their Thoughts and Attention, that they make no effectual improvement in the practice of Religion, and it has little or no real influence upon their Lives and Converſations: Theſe our Saviour compares to Ground

which

which brought forth Corn indeed, but together with it such a Number of Thorns and Weeds, as quickly over-ran and choaked it, so that it never came to any Perfection. These are the several ways, of which our Saviour warns us in this Parable, by which they who hear the constant preaching of the Gospel, may yet be guilty of a final miscarriage, through Carelessness, and Inattention; through want of Constancy, and good Resolution; through the Cares and Covetousness and Pleasures of the World: So that there was great reason for the Caution he gives his Disciples at the Conclusion of his Discourse upon this Subject, ver. 18; *Take heed how ye hear.* Lastly; Others there are, who, being of a truly good and virtuous disposition, willingly and cheerfully embrace the Word of God, believe it heartily, adhere to it steadily, obey it sincerely, and show forth the Effects of it in the constant practice and persevering course of a good Life: And These our Saviour in the Text compares to *good ground*, which brought forth much fruit; *That on the good ground*, saith he, *are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with Patience.* SERM. LXXVII.

The general intent and meaning of the parable being thus explained; the Words themselves offer to us the following things, worthy our particular Observation.

I. *First*; That the first and principal thing required, to qualify a man and make him meet for the Kingdom of God, is an *honest and good heart*, a true and right Disposition, an upright and sincere intention: *That on the good ground, are they, which in an honest and good Heart.* Our Saviour *was* sent as a Light into the World, to recover men out of the Darkness and Slavery of Sin, into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God: But, as the Brightness of the *Sun* it self discovers no Objects to Them, who have no Organs of Seeing to discern its Light; so the Doctrine of the Gospel has no effect, no influence upon Those, whose hearts are not honest and sincere, to entertain it in the Love thereof. God is not obliged to enlighten such, as are wilfully blind, and which refuse to search after and discern the Truth, because they *have pleasure in unrighteousness*: But they who are desirous to *do* his Will, *shall* know and understand it; and be enabled to practise it acceptably. There is in the temper and disposition of such persons, a likeness and congruity, with the everlasting Law of Righteousness; The Nature and Commands of God, the Divine Life both in Heaven and in Earth, are agreeable to them; and the Doctrine of the Gospel is embraced by them with Complacency, as Truth is received by Children who have never been prejudiced thro' ill Habits, and as good Seed springs up and flourishes immediately, in its natural and proper Soil. This honest and good heart, this Innocency and Simplicity of Mind, this Freedom from Malice, from evil and corrupt designs; is the disposition which our Saviour requires, and which he esteems so highly, when in the parallel place to the Text, upon the occasion of young Children being brought unto him, he declares that *of such is the Kingdom of God.* It is the temper of *Nathanael*, that *Israelite* indeed, of whom our Saviour bore this Testimony, even *before* his acknowledging *Him* to be the Messias, that there was *no guile in him.* It is the disposition of the *Bereans*; who, when Christ was preached to them by the Apostles, to be He of whom all the Prophets witnessed; immediately *they searched the Scriptures*, the Writings of the *Old Testament, daily*; to see *whether those things were so*, or not. It is the temper of *Zacheus*, who, upon our Saviour's preaching Repentance unto Life; without delay declared, because his Profession had been such as in all probability had exposed him to many Temptations of Extortion, that *the half of his goods he gave to the poor, and, if he had wronged any man, he restored him four-fold.* In a word, it is that preparation of heart, with which St. *Peter*'s Auditors came, when by the strength and evidence of his Discourse, there was in one day added to the Church about three thousand Souls: concerning whom it is said, *Acts* ii. 47, that *the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved*: The original

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word does not ſignify *ſuch as ſhould be ſaved*, but ſuch as *are or were ſaved*; that is, ſuch as were diſpoſed, (as the Apoſtle in the ſame place expreſſes it,) to *ſave themſelves from that untoward generation*; ſuch as were *ready in Order* (τεταγμένοι) (as the like perſons are elſewere deſcribed) to receive the Doctrine of eternal Life. All which, with other the like Expreſſions, muſt not be underſtood to ſignify, as if ſuch perſons were already actually indued with *all* Chriſtian Virtues and Graces; (For theſe indeed are not the preparations *for*, but the Fruits and Effects *of* the Spirit;) but they ſignify only the general capacity or aptneſs, a willingneſs or ſuitableneſs of Diſpoſition, to attain and improve them. Which Diſpoſition, under the diſadvantages of ignorance and want of Inſtruction, of prejudice and error, and of variety of Temptations without ſuitable aſſiſtances to overcome them; may eaſily lie hid, and not diſcover it ſelf; nay, may ſometimes ſeem to be extinguiſhed in great meaſure, by contrary Practices; But, upon due inſtruction and reaſonable conviction, it will not fail to appear and exert it ſelf. Thus St. *Paul* himſelf was once not only an Unbeliever, but a Perſecutor alſo of the Church of God; But yet even *Then* there was a ſincerity in him, which made him act zealouſly, though in a wrong way; and afterwards he eaſily found mercy, becauſe he had done it ignorantly in Unbelief. The beſt and moſt innocent Underſtanding may, for want of due Inſtruction, be led aſtray with prejudices; but it will not become obſtinate and incorrigible: The beſt and moſt fruitful Soil, while it continues uncultivated, may *not only* bring forth no good fruit, but moreover be over-run with weeds and thorns; yet being capable of amendment and juſt improvement, it will not fail, upon due cultivation, to diſcover its Fruitfulneſs. *The earth*, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dreſſed, receiveth bleſſing from God: But that which* (after this, ſtill) *beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto curſing, whoſe end is to be burned*; Heb. vi. 7: The contrary temper, is That of thoſe, who after all reaſonable means of conviction, ſtill continue incorrigible and unreformed; theſe have no principle of ſincerity and upright intention in them, by which they may be recovered and ſaved; (theſe are none of the Sheep of Chriſt;) but their End muſt be, unavoidable Deſtruction.

The Application therefore of This Obſervation, is to All who profeſs the Religion of Chriſt. If no man, without an upright and ſincere Intention, can worthily receive the Doctrine of Chriſt, or is capable of becoming a true member of his *Kingdom on Earth*; What hope is there for ſuch, who *already* profeſs to have entertained his Doctrine and to be his Diſciples, that they ſhall be judged worthy to be admitted into his *Kingdom in Heaven*; if, notwithſtanding this Profeſſion, they ſtill continue to act with a diſhoneſt and unſincere Heart? If in the *Progreſs* of a Chriſtian life, they ſtill want that firſt and moſt neceſſary Qualification, without which they could not worthily *begin* it, nor be duly prepar'd for ſo much as the *Admiſſion or Entrance* into ſo excellent a State, into the Profeſſion of ſo holy a Religion? If, inſtead of renouncing the Vanities and Temptations of the World, for the advantage and improvement of Religion; they on the contrary make Religion only ſubordinate to the Intereſts and Pleaſures of the World? Surely the Hope of ſuch Perſons, is, as *Job* elegantly expreſſes it, like to a *Spider's Web*; and the *joy of the hypocrite, is but for a moment*.

II. *Secondly*; The *ſecond* thing remarkable in the Words, is the Suppoſition they contain, that it is not ſufficient that a man be of a good diſpoſition in *general*, but it is moreover neceſſary in *particular*, that he hear and entertain the Doctrine of Chriſt: *That on the good ground, are they, which in an honeſt and good heart, having* heard *the* Word. It is not ſufficient that the Soil be good, but it muſt alſo be ſown with good Seed: It is not ſufficient that the Eye is made capable of diſcerning the Light, if God had not created *light* in the World, to diſpel that Darkneſs, which at the Chaos ſat on the Face of the Deep. Chriſt is the true Light, that is come into the World; and

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every one that will not walk in darkneſs, is indiſpenſably obliged to receive His doctrine. Mere diſpoſitions, Faculties, and Capacities without improvement, may poſſibly be very ineffectual; as is evident from the extreme ignorance of ſome whole Nations, even at this day. But Learning and Inſtruction civilizes and cultivates mens nature, raiſing it from ſavage to humane; and true Religion improves it ſtill farther, and exalts it to divine. Now there is no religion in the World, but the *Chriſtian* only, that is at all able to furniſh men with inſtructions ſufficiently clear, with motives ſufficiently weighty, with aſſiſtances ſufficiently powerful, to overcome the Temptations of this preſent World; For, *who is he that overcometh the World, but he that believeth that Jeſus is the Son of God?* and *This* only *is the victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith*, 1 Joh. v. 4; *Our Faith*, that is, our firm and ſtedfaſt belief and aſſurance, of the Pardon of paſt Sins through the merits of Chriſt, of the divine aſſiſtance for the future, of a reſurrection from the dead, of a judgment to come, and of an eternal State of rewards or puniſhments hereafter. Nothing leſs than this, can effectually enable men to overcome the World: Except a man embrace therefore *This* Faith, *except he be born again of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God; Neither is there any other Name given under Heaven, by which we muſt be ſaved.* All that has been ſaid upon This Head, muſt by no means be applied to any of thoſe, to whom the Goſpel was either never preached, or never faithfully and reaſonably repreſented. For to whom *little* is given, of Them will not be *much* required: To ſuch Perſons, God will either in his own good time cauſe the *words* to be preached, *by which they and their houſes ſhall be ſaved*; as he did to *Cornelius*, that ſincerely pious and devout Centurion; or elſe he will finally judge them by other meaſures: For *the Judge of all the Earth will do* what is *right*, and with Equity ſhall he judge the Nations. But all ſuch, to whom the Light of the Goſpel has been manifeſted, are indiſpenſably obliged to *walk by that Light*; and modern Unbelievers in Chriſtian Nations act very unworthily, when they obſtinately oppoſe that revealed Religion, from whence alone they have borrowed even the *Philoſophy* they pretend to. For, (as is evident from the extreme ignorance of the whole Heathen World) it is from the *Chriſtian* Doctrine only, that Unbelievers have Now borrowed all that knowledge, by which they would endeavour to ſet up mere nature (or rather abſolute Scepticiſm) in oppoſition to Chriſt's Religion.

III. *Thirdly*; The next thing obſervable in the Words of the Text, is, That it is not ſufficient that men hear and receive the Doctrine of Chriſt, but they muſt alſo *keep* or *retain* it; Who *in an honeſt and good heart, having heard the word*, keep *it*: It muſt not be like Seed ſcattered looſe upon the Earth, which the Birds of the Air pick up, or Paſſengers tread under foot, or the firſt ſhower of rain waſhes away; but it muſt be like that, which entreth into the Earth, and abides in it, and grows, and takes root therein. It muſt be underſtood, and remembred, and frequently meditated upon: The Principles of Religion muſt be thoroughly imbibed by a man, and fixt in him, and make deep and laſting impreſſions upon his Mind: They muſt be converted, as it were, into the *Food and Nouriſhment* of his Soul; and become, its very Habit and Temper: They muſt be in him *Active* and Ruling Principles, the firſt ſprings of all his Motions, and the continual guides and directors of all the Actions of his Life. This is what St. *John* expreſſes by the Seed *remaining* in him, 1 *Joh.* iii. 9; *Whoſoever is born of God, doth not commit Sin; for his Seed* remaineth *in him; and he cannot Sin, becauſe he is born of God.* St. *Matthew*, in the parallel place, in the explication of the ſame Parable, expreſſes it by hearing and *underſtanding* the Word, St. *Matthew* xiii. 23; *i. e.* meditating upon it and ſtudying it, ſo as to make it a principle of Life and Action; For ſo in Scripture-phraſe, it is always to be lookt upon as a general Rule of interpretation; that the *Fear of the Lord, That* only *is Wiſdom*; and *to depart from evil, That* only *is* acknowledged to be *Underſtanding*;

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ing; And otherwiſe, he is That *fooliſh* perſon, whom our Saviour deſcribes as building his houſe upon the Sand. For ſo, in Scripture-phraſe, not Ignorant *Perſons only and* Infidels, are ſtiled Fools and Unbelievers; but *Fools*, in Scripture-expreſſion, more commonly ſignifies, ſuch perſons as *act not* according to what they *know*; and *Unbelievers*, ſuch as *practiſe not* what they profeſs to *believe*.

IV. *Fourthly*; Therefore, Our Saviour adds further, that Thoſe whom he compares to good ground, muſt, if they will juſtify that Character, make evidence of it finally by their *bringing forth Fruit: Who having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth Fruit.* This is the only certain and infallible Mark, of the Truth and Sincerity of all that is ſuppoſed to have gone before; the only ſubſtantial evidence, of their having an honeſt, and good Heart; of their embracing, and believing the Word; of their keeping, and having meditated upon it. All *other* Signs and Proofs may fail; all *other* marks and characters whatſoever of a good Chriſtian, may prove erroneous and deceitful, not only to others, but very poſſibly in great meaſure even to a man's ſelf alſo; except *This* only, of his *bringing forth the Fruits of the Spirit*; that is, living in the Habitual Practice of all Chriſtian Virtues; which St. *Paul* calls walking *worthy* of *God who has called us*, and *worthy* of the *vocation wherewith we are called*. And *This* is an evidence, which can never fail; For the *Effect* muſt always of neceſſity be proportionable to the nature and operations of the *Cauſe* that produced it; and there can be no miſtake in judging of the goodneſs of a *Cauſe*, from the excellency of its proper and immediate *Effects*. *A corrupt Tree, cannot bring forth good fruit; neither do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thiſtles*; St. Matt. vii. 16. So that the Rule our Saviour gives for the tryal of true and falſe *Prophets*, holds ſtill *more evidently* in judging of good and bad *Chriſtians*, and eſpecially in the judgment men are to paſs upon *Themſelves* and concerning their *own* eſtate; *By their Fruits* they may *know* it, And St. *John*'s determination is liable to no evaſion or miſinterpretation, 1 *John* iii. 10; *In this the children of God are manifeſt, and the children of the Devil; Whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his Brother.*

V. *Fifthly*; It is obſervable that our Saviour concludes his Character of a good Chriſtian, with the addition of *Patience*, as a Qualification neceſſary to be joined with all thoſe hitherto mentioned: *Having heard the word, they keep it, and bring forth fruit with* Patience: i. e. As Corn ſown, if it be ever likely to come to any Perfection, muſt take ſuch deep and firm root in the Earth, as not to be ſcorched by Heat, nor withered by Cold, nor waſhed away with floods, nor choaked and over-run with Weeds; ſo a good Chriſtian muſt be armed with *Patience*, to reſiſt the Aſſaults of Perſecution, the Temptations of the World, the Enticements of bad Company, the Allurements of Pleaſure and Profit, and the perpetual Treachery of his own corrupt Affections and inordinate Paſſions; 'till at length he obtains a title to that Promiſe of our Saviour, that he *ſhall be ſaved*, becauſe he has *endured unto the End. To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality; eternal life.*

Laſtly, and to conclude; It is worthy of remark, that St. *Matthew*, in the parallel place of his Goſpel, adds to the Words of the Text, that of Thoſe who kept the Word, and bore Fruit with patience, *ſome brought forth an hundred-fold, ſome ſixty, and ſome thirty.* And this denotes to us theſe two things. 1*ſt*, that thoſe who embrace and obey the Goſpel in ſincerity according to their Power, though they have not the Capacity and Ability of doing actually ſo much good in the World, as others have; yet ſhall be accepted according to the Integrity and Sincerity of their Intention: Thus the Servant who gained two talents, was as certainly admitted into his Maſter's joy, tho' not into the ſame Proportion of it, as he who had gained ten; and St. *Paul* argues, that *in a great houſe, there are not only veſſels of gold and of ſilver, but alſo of wood and of earth; and ſome to honour, and ſome to diſhonour*; by *diſhonour*, meaning, not *uſeleſneſs* and being *wholly rejected*, (as ſome underſtand it,) but only

only *a leſs Degree of value and eſteem*, (as the nature and deſign of his ſimili- SERM.
tude plainly requires.) Which though they be indeed *within* the houſe, and LXXVII.
not wholly excluded; yet no man who has a worthy Senſe of religion, can long content himſelf with being of that number, without deſiring any further improvement. For 2*dly*, This diſtinction of *ſome bringing forth an hundred-fold, ſome ſixty, and ſome thirty*, as on the one hand it is an encouragement to the *meaneſt* Perſons, who are ſincerely religious; ſo on the other hand it points out a very great advantage, which God has put into the Hands of *Thoſe of greater Abilities*. Power and Authority, Honour and Dignity, Riches and Intereſt, are ſo many *Talents* committed to mens charge; which if they make uſe of to the Glory of God and the publick Good of Mankind, they thereby entitle themſelves to a proportionably greater and more illuſtrious Reward; For *they that are wiſe, ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament; but they that turn many to righteouſneſs*, (by great Example or Power, or any other commendable means,) ſhall ſhine with a yet brighter glory *as the ſtars for ever and ever*.

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The End and Design of the *Jewish* Law.

GAL. ii. 15, 16.

We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

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THERE is nothing has given greater occasion to false opinions, and unreasonable disputes in Religion; than the picking out single Texts of Scripture, and interpreting them according to the first *sound* of the words, without considering the coherence and connexion of the whole Discourse. Thus, *e.g.* if we search on one hand into the Ground of many of those mens Assertions, who love to aggravate the *corruption of human nature*, and the *natural misery of mankind*; we shall find the true foundation of them, to be the applying those places of Scripture to the *whole bulk* of mankind, which are evidently and expresly spoken only of some of the *worst of men*: On the other hand the reason why others have so magnified the *natural faculties of men*, as that they have been thought to *diminish* and *detract from* the *grace* of *God*; is because they

they have applied those Texts to the *generality of men*, which are spoken only of the *most perfect Christians*. Again; the foundation of those mens opinions, who have extolled some *one* particular virtue in opposition to, or as an equivalent for, *all other* duties; is their having interpreted such places of Scripture concerning some *one* particular virtue, as are plainly meant of the *whole* Christian Religion: And the reason why others have thought *no* moral Virtues at all, necessary to be practised by Believers; is because they have applied those Texts to the most *essential* and *fundamental Duties* of the *Christian* Religion, which were intended only of the *Ceremonial* performances of the *Jewish* Law. Whoever therefore will so read and understand the Holy Scriptures, as from thence to determine truly what is necessary to be believed, and practised by Christians; must not only from single Texts, and those interpreted at pleasure, frame to himself or receive from Authority of Others, a Scheme of Religion; (for then there will be as many different Systems, as the fancies and prejudices of Men or different Bodies of Men are different;) but he must consider the nature and design of the several parts of the whole Revelation; he must consider the proper Signification of those terms and expressions, which were in use at the time when the Books of Scripture were written; and above all, he must attend to the coherence and connexion of the Author's Discourse, the occasion of his writing, and the true Scope and Intent of each passage, from whence he would deduce any Doctrine of Faith, or Rule of Practice. The *Gospels*, are a brief History of the Life of our Blessed Saviour; and contain in them, *1st*, the Terms or Conditions, upon which those who would *become* Subjects of the Kingdom of Christ, are to be admitted into that State; and *2dly*, the general Laws or Rules, to which those who do *already* profess themselves Christians, must conform their Lives. The Terms or Conditions, upon which men are to *become* Subjects of the Kingdom of Christ, are declared by *John the Baptist* and by our Saviour himself at his first Preaching, to be Faith and Repentance. The General Laws or Rules of Obedience, by which those who are *already* Subjects of his Kingdom, must govern their Lives; are delivered directly and principally in our Saviour's *Sermon upon the Mount*; but occasionally also urged in his *other* Discourses, and most lively expressed in the example of his Life: The Sermon upon the Mount, contains a particular Explication of the ten Commandments, which are the moral and eternal Law of God, explaining the Duty and Obedience we owe to *God*, and the Love and Charity we must perform to *men*; It contains also a *Vindication* of That Law, from the *false and corrupt* Glosses of the *Jewish* Doctors; and Exhortations to a more exalted, spiritual, and perfect manner of performing those Duties, than was before insisted on even by the *true* intent of the Law. The *Parables* and occasional Discourses of our Saviour, are chiefly to explain the *nature*, and set forth the true *design* of the Gospel; which for the most part in those Discourses is called the *Kingdom of Heaven*, to express the greatness and excellency of that Dispensation. And *lastly*, the History of his *Life*, is a most compleat pattern of *all Christian Virtues*, proposed plainly and familiarly to our Imitation: but more especially it is an example of *patience* under afflictions, of *resignation* to the will of God in all conditions, and of *contempt* of the world. Thus the Gospels contain a plain System of Christian Religion in general, enforced both by precept and example; and are therefore profitable to instruct us in all Righteousness, and to furnish us thoroughly unto all good Works. The *Acts* of the Holy Apostles, contain the History of the Apostles Preaching and Doctrine, which was the same with what their Master had before taught, namely, Repentance and Obedience; together with an account of the Success of this their Ministry, and of the State of the Infant-Churches in those purest times, immediately after their being founded by the Apostles. The *Epistles* contain either *general* Exhortations to *all* Christians, in order to confirm and strengthen them in the Faith; or *particular* and *occasional* Discourses to *single* Churches, upon particular Controversies or Matters of Dispute. Those which contain *general* Exhortations to all Christians, are easy to be understood by all, who read them with a sincere Desire to be instructed in their Duty, or confirmed in their Faith: Those which are written upon *particular* questions of dispute, cannot be rightly understood without first understanding the *matter* of those Disputes, and the *occasions* upon which

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which the Epiſtles were written. Of this latter ſort are many of St. *Paul's* Epiſtles, and eſpecially This to the *Galatians*, and That to the *Romans*. Which becauſe they relate almoſt wholly to a Controverſy, that aroſe upon the very firſt planting of Chriſtianity; they have in later times, for want of attending to the true occaſion of their being written, been much miſinterpreted, and by many wreſted to their own deſtruction. And no Explication of *particular* Paſſages, can be of ſo much importance towards ſtating the Apoſtle's true Senſe, as giving in the firſt place a diſtinct View of the *general* Deſign of his *whole* Writings. In order therefore to the clearer underſtanding the true Deſign of theſe Epiſtles, it is to be obſerved, that before the coming of Chriſt, the *Jews* were the peculiar People of God, ſelected out of all the Nations of the earth to be the Standard of true Religion, the People among whom God would choſe to place his Name, and over whom ſhould continually watch the peculiar care of the divine Providence: *To* them *were committed the oracles of God*, Rom. iii. 2; *to* them *pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the ſervice of God, and the promiſes; Whoſe are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the fleſh Chriſt came, who is over all God bleſſed for ever*; Rom. ix. 4, 5. *To them were committed the oracles of God*; i. e. with *them* were intruſted all the Revelations of the Will of God, the Law and the Prophecies, as the people with whom God thought fit to depoſite theſe things for the benefit of the World; to them they were committed as a light or ſtandard to which all Nations might flow, and in fact we find that Proſelytes from all Nations attracted by the ſplendor of thoſe great and mighty actions which God wrought for and among this people, did come in and embrace their Religion: *To them pertained the adoption*, i. e. they were honoured with the peculiar privilege of being accounted as the Sons or People of God, and of being accordingly under the more peculiar care and protection of his providence. *When the moſt high divided to the nations their inheritance, when he ſeparated the Sons of Adam, he ſet the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Iſrael; for the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance*; Deut. xxxii. 9; i. e. God ſo divided and ſettled the nations of the earth, as to have the people of the *Jews* in a more particular manner under his own immediate Care and Protection; *for the Lord has choſen Jacob unto himſelf, and Iſrael for his peculiar treaſure*; Pſal. xxxv. 4. *To them pertained the glory*; i. e. among *them was the ark and temple of God*, the (*Shecinah*) or *glorious preſence of the divine Majeſty*; *In Judah was God known, his name was great in Iſrael*; *In Salem alſo was his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Sion*; Pſ. lxxvi. 1, 2. *To them pertained the covenants*, i. e. with them God entered ſolemnly into covenant, *that he would be* their *God and they ſhould be* his *people*; and confirmed this covenant with the ſacramental *ſeal of circumciſion, and ſprinkling of blood. To them pertained the giving of the law, and the ſervice of God, and the promiſes*; i. e. their manner of worſhip was ſuch as was preſcribed them in a wonderful and miraculous manner by God himſelf; and their polity alſo was of divine Inſtitution and Appointment: *God ſhewed his word unto Jacob, his ſtatutes and his judgments unto Iſrael; He hath not dealt ſo with any other nation, neither have the heathen knowledge of his laws*; Pſ. cxlvii. 19, 20: To *them* was the law given, written on tables of ſtone with God's own hand, and to *them* were the prophets always ſent with inſpired inſtructions. Inſpired by the Spirit of God to inſtruct them occaſionally in their duty, to warn them of impending Judgments, and to exhort them to prevent thoſe Judgments falling upon them, by a timely repentance; and to *them* particularly belonged all the promiſes contained in the law and in the prophets. Laſtly, *Theirs were the fathers, and of them according to the fleſh Chriſt came, who is over all God bleſſed for ever*; i. e. They were the poſterity of thoſe Patriarchs, to whom God had ſo often promiſed and ſworn by himſelf, *that in their ſeed ſhould all the nations of the earth be bleſſed*; and among them was born that *Meſſias*, of whom ſo great things had been prophefied, and who was therefore *the expectation of all the ends of the earth*. Theſe great and glorious privileges, the later *Jews*, did not make a right uſe of with Humility and Thankfulneſs, but valued themſelves too highly, and deſpiſed all other Nations as Aliens from the Commonwealth of *Iſrael*, Strangers to the covenant of promiſe, and ſcarce worthy of the protection of the divine Providence. The eſta-

bliſhment of their law and ceremonies they imagined to be deſigned of God to continue for ever; and the promiſes contained in the law and the prophets they thought belong'd ſo peculiarly to themſelves, that they would not believe any other people ſhould ever be allowed to be partakers of them. When the Meſſiah himſelf ſhould appear, they were perſwaded that he was to eſtabliſh an everlaſting Kingdom over the *Jewiſh* nation only, and ſo become indeed the wonder and amazement, but not the Salvation of the *Gentiles*. This error of theirs, prevailed long even among our Saviour's Diſciples themſelves, and began then firſt to be reproved and oppoſed, when St. *Peter*, having an expreſs command from Heaven *not to count any man common or unclean*, Acts x. 28; *went and preached the Goſpel to Cornelius the centurion; being convinced that God was of a truth no reſpecter of perſons, but that he had unto the Gentiles alſo granted repentance unto life; and that in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteouſneſs is accepted of him.* Upon This the converted *Jews*, who had not yet laid aſide their ancient prejudices, contended earneſtly for the neceſſity of continuing to obſerve the ceremonial Law; *teaching the brethren every where, and ſaying, except ye be circumciſed after the manner of Moſes, ye cannot be ſaved*; Acts xv. 1. Againſt whom, the Apoſtles aſſembled on purpoſe in a Council at *Jeruſalem*, made a ſolemn determination; as it is at large related, *Acts* xv: and accordingly we find St. *Paul*, (as being the Apoſtle to whom was *particularly* committed the preaching of the Goſpel to the *Gentiles*) in all his Writings earneſtly exhorting his Gentile Converts not to look upon themſelves as bound to obſerve the law of *Moſes*, but on the contrary *to ſtand faſt in that liberty wherewith Chriſt had made them free.* This is the true State of that controverſy, which at the time when this Epiſtle to the *Galatians*, and that to the *Romans* were written; was the chief and almoſt only conſiderable Subject of diſpute in the Chriſtian Church. Now that there are abundance of paſſages in theſe Epiſtles, which ſo plainly relates to this Controverſy, that they cannot poſſibly be interpreted to any other ſenſe, is very evident. A great part of the Epiſtle to the *Romans* is in expreſs Words about the caſting off the *Jews*, and the coming in of the *Gentiles*; particularly the ixth, xth, and xith Chapters; and the xivth Chapter is wholly imployed in ſhewing the unneceſſarineſs of the *Jewiſh* obſervation of days, and diſtinction of meats; *One man eſteemeth one day above another, another eſteemeth every day alike*, ver. 5; *and I know and am perſwaded by the Lord Jeſus, that there is nothing unclean of it ſelf, but to him that eſteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean*; ver. 14. In the Epiſtle to the *Galatians*, the ſame Apoſtle warns his Gentile converts againſt ſuch as would perſwade them to Judaize; *They conſtrain you*, ſaith he, *to be circumciſed, only leſt they ſhould ſuffer perſecution for the croſs of Chriſt*; *For neither do they themſelves who are circumciſed keep the law, but deſire to have you circumciſed that they may glory in your fleſh*; ch. vi. ver. 12, 13: He aſſures them that *in Jeſus Chriſt neither circumciſion availeth any thing nor uncircumciſion, but a new creature*, ch. vi. ver. 15: He exhorts them earneſtly, *to ſtand faſt in their Chriſtian liberty, and not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage*: He tells them alſo how *he openly rebuked St. Peter at Antioch, for withdrawing and ſeparating himſelf from the Gentiles, for fear of them which were of the circumciſion*; ch. ii. 12. All which, and many other the like paſſages referring ſo evidently and expreſly to the fore-mentioned controverſy, whether it was neceſſary or not for the new Converts to keep the Moſaick law; are a certain guide to direct us in interpreting the other parts of theſe Epiſtles. This therefore being premiſed *in general*, we may proceed to obſerve more *particularly*; that the Apoſtle deſigning on one hand to magnify the Goſpel by ſetting forth its ſufficiency to Salvation, and on the other hand to demonſtrate the inſufficiency and unneceſſarineſs of the ceremonial Obſervances of the *Jewiſh* Law; does all along make uſe of ſuch terms to expreſs the Chriſtian and *Jewiſh* Religion by, as may beſt ſerve to ſet forth the excellency of the one, and diminiſh the opinion which men had taken up of the neceſſity of the other. And

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1*ſt*; Becauſe the firſt and moſt fundamental duty of the Goſpel, is believing in God, and believing that moſt perfect Revelation of his Will, which he has made to mankind by our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; whereas on the contrary the principal part of that Religion which the Judaizing Chriſtians ſo earneſtly contended for,

SERM. LXXVIII. was an anxious obſervance of the burdenſome Rites of the ceremonial Law; therefore the Apoſtle calls the Chriſtian Religion *Faith*, and the *Jewiſh* Religion *the Law*. Rom. iii. 28; *Therefore we conclude*. ſaith he, *that a man is juſtified by faith without the deeds of the law*; His meaning is, It clearly appears from what he had already argued, that obedience to the Chriſtian Religion elſewhere called the obedience of Faith, is ſufficient to juſtify a man, without obſerving the ceremonies of the *Jewiſh* Law: And ver. 13. *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we eſtabliſh the law*; i. e. Do we then, as ſome men object, by our preaching up the Chriſtian Religion diſannul and make void the law of God or that revelation of his will which he made to the *Jews?* No, we are ſo far from that, that by introducing Chriſtianity we eſtabliſh, confirm, and perfect the moral and immutable part of the law much more effectually, than the *Jewiſh* ceremonies were able to do: Thus likewiſe in the epiſtle to the *Galatians*, ch. iii. ver. 2; *This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* Or as it is expreſſed, ver. 5; *He that miniſtreth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doth he it by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?* I appeal unto you yourſelves, who contend ſo earneſtly for the neceſſity of keeping up the *Jewiſh* ceremonies, was it by your obſerving the rites of the *Jewiſh* religion *that ye received the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt*, or by your being converted to the Chriſtian? So alſo, *Gal.* iii. 24; *The Law, ſaith he, was our Schoolmaſter to bring us unto Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by faith*; i. e. the *Jewiſh* diſpenſation was appointed by God in condeſcenſion to the weakneſs of that people, to fit them by degrees for the reception of the Goſpel. And ch. ii. ver. 15; the Apoſtle, having rebuked St. *Peter* openly for withdrawing himſelf from the Gentiles at *Antioch*, he adds, in the words of the Text, *We who are Jews by nature and not Sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not juſtified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt, even we have believed in Jeſus Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by the faith of Chriſt, and not by the works of the law*; i. e. if *we* our ſelves, ſaith he, who were born and educated in the *Jewiſh* Religion, being convinced that that Religion was not able to juſtify us in the Sight of God, have thought it neceſſary to embrace the Goſpel of Chriſt, in hopes to be juſtified thereby; how much leſs reaſon have you to compel the *Gentiles*, who were never brought up at all in the *Jewiſh* Religion, to begin to conform themſelves to the manners of the *Jews*, after their converſion to Chriſtianity?

2*dly*, Becauſe the Chriſtian religion teaches us to expect ſalvation not from our own merits, but from the grace of God, that is, according to the terms of that new and gracious Covenant wherein God has promiſed to accept of ſincere Repentance and Amendment, inſtead of perfect unſinning Obedience; whereas on the contrary the *Jews* depended upon their exact performance of the works of the law; therefore the Apoſtle calls the Chriſtian religion *Grace*, and the *Jewiſh* he ſtiles *Works*; Rom. xi. 5, 6; *So then at this preſent time alſo there is a remnant according to the election of Grace*; i. e. though the nation of the *Jews*, having rejected the gracious offer of the Goſpel, are thereupon rejected from being the people of God, yet hath God reſerved to himſelf a remnant from among them, even thoſe who have embraced this grace of God, which is the Goſpel of Chriſt. *And if it be by Grace*, ſays he, *then is it no more of works*; that is, if it be upon account of their having embraced the Chriſtian Religion, that they are reckoned the peculiar people of God, then is not this privilege any longer annexed to the profeſſors of the *Jewiſh* religion; *Otherwiſe grace is no more grace*; *i. e.* otherwiſe the Chriſtian Religion is in vain, and not what it pretends to be, the grace of God. Thus alſo, ch. vi. ver. 14; *Sin ſhall not have the dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace*; *i. e.* ye are not under the *Jewiſh* Religion, but under the Chriſtian. So likewiſe in the Epiſtle to the *Galatians*, ch. v. ver. 4; *Chriſt is become of no effect unto you, whoſoever of you are juſtified by the law*; *ye are fallen from grace*; *i. e.* whoſoever will needs retain the *Jewiſh* Religion, he takes upon him to fulfil the whole law; forſaking the gracious diſpenſation of the Chriſtian Religion, and therefore Chriſt ſhall be of no effect unto him. Again,

3*dly*, Becauſe the duties of the Chriſtian Religion are almoſt wholly moral and Spiritual, reſpecting the inward diſpoſition of the heart and mind; whereas on the contrary the ceremonies of the *Jewiſh* law were for the moſt part external;

and

and, as the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* ſtiles them, carnal ordinances, reſpecting chiefly the outward purification of the body; therefore the Apoſtle calls the Chriſtian Religion *Spirit*, and the *Jewiſh* he ſtiles *Fleſh*. Thus in the Epiſtle to the *Romans*, ch. viii. ver. 3, 4; *For what the Law could not do in that it was weak through the Fleſh, God ſending his own ſon in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh, and for Sin condemned Sin in the fleſh, That the righteouſneſs of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the fleſh but after the Spirit*; *i. e.* Whereas the *Jewiſh* Religion, becauſe of its outward and carnal ordinances was weak and inſufficient to make men truly righteous, God ſending his own Son in the likeneſs of ſinful man to offer up himſelf a ſacrifice for the Sins of mankind, eſtabliſhed the Chriſtian Religion, which purifying throughly the whole heart and mind, and purging the conſcience from dead works, might through the grace and mercy of God avail to juſtify men from all things, from which they could not be juſtified by the law. Thus alſo in the Epiſtle to the *Galatians* iii. 3; *Are ye ſo fooliſh? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the fleſh?* Are ye ſo weak as to think, that after ye have embraced the Goſpel of Chriſt, ye can become yet more perfect by obſerving the ceremonies of the *Jewiſh* law. SERM. LXXVIII.

This is evidently the true meaning of the Terms, *Faith* and *Works*, the *Law* and *Grace*, the *Spirit* and the *Fleſh*, in theſe Epiſtles; and under theſe Terms the whole deſign of his diſcourſe, is plainly nothing elſe but to ſhow; *That*

Firſt, The *Jewiſh* Religion having proved inſufficient to make men truly holy, as natural Religion alſo had before done, there was therefore a neceſſity of ſetting up another inſtitution of Religion, which might be more available and effectual to that end. Now the ſetting up a new inſtitution of Religion, neceſſarily implying the aboliſhing of the old, it follows that Chriſtianity was not to be added to *Judaiſm*, but that *Judaiſm* was to be changed into Chriſtianity, *i. e.* that the *Jewiſh* Religion was from thence forward to ceaſe, and the Chriſtian Religion to ſucceed in its room: this argument the Apoſtle inſiſts upon in *ch.* i. ii. v. vi. and vii. to the *Romans*, and in *ch.* i. and iv. to the *Galatians*. In *ch.* i. and ii. of the Epiſtle to the *Romans*, he ſhows that the *Jewiſh* Religion had proved inſufficient to make men truly holy, as the natural Religion had before done; in the v*th ch.* of that Epiſtle to the *Romans* and in the i*ſt* to the *Galatians*, he gives an account of the Inſtitution of the Chriſtian Religion, as more available and effectual to that end; in the vii*th ch.* to the *Romans*, he ſhows that this new Inſtitution of Religion neceſſarily implies the aboliſhing of the old one, and this he does from the ſimilitude of a Woman's being bound by the Law to her Husband ſo long as he lives, but if her Husband be dead ſhe is freed from the Law of her Husband; which Similitude he applies, ver. 4; *Wherefore my brethren ye alſo are become dead to the law by the body of Chriſt, that ye ſhould be married to another, even to him who is raiſed from the dead, that we ſhould bring forth fruit unto God:* In the iv*th ch.* to the *Galatians* he proves the ſame thing from the ſimilitude of a young heir's being under a governor or tutor; ver. 1; *I ſay that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a Servant, though he be Lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father; Even ſo we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world; But when the fulneſs of time was come, God ſent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem thoſe that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons*; *i. e.* The *Jewiſh* Law was an Inſtitution of Religion adapted by God in great condeſcenſion to the weak apprehenſions of that people; but when the fulneſs of time was come, God ſent his Son Jeſus Chriſt to inſtitute a more perfect form of Religion, after the ſettlement of which in the World the former diſpenſation was to ceaſe: And that it muſt needs do ſo, is evident alſo from the nature of the thing itſelf; For as after remiſſion of Sin obtained by the ſufficient Sacrifice of Chriſt, there needed no more legal Sacrifices to be offered for Sin; ſo in all other its ritual parts, the firſt Covenant was in courſe taken away by eſtabliſhing the ſecond; there being neceſſarily a *diſannulling of the Commandment going before, for the weakneſs and unprofitableneſs thereof*; Heb. vii. 18. *That*

Secondly; The Summ and Eſſence of all Religion is Obedience to the moral and eternal Law of God. Since therefore the ceremonies of the *Jewiſh* Law were never of any eſteem in the Sight of God, any otherwiſe than as they promoted this

SERM. LXXVIII. this great end, and prepared mens hearts for the reception of that more perfect Inſtitution of Religion, wherein God was to be worſhipped and obeyed in Spirit and in truth; it is manifeſt that when this more perfect inſtitution of Religion was ſettled, the former and more imperfect one was to ceaſe: This argument the Apoſtle inſiſts on in the ii*d ch.* to the *Romans*, and in the iii*d* to the *Galatians*; in the ii*d* to the *Romans* he ſhews that every inſtitution of Religion, and particularly the *Jewiſh*, was no otherwiſe of any eſteem in the ſight of God, than as it promoted that great end of obedience to his moral and eternal Law; *For circumciſion*, ſays he, *verily profiteth if thou keep the law, but if thou be a breaker of the law thy circumciſion is made uncircumciſion; therefore if the uncircumciſion keep the righteouſneſs of the law, ſhall not his uncircumciſion be counted for circumciſion? And ſhall not uncircumciſion which is by nature, if it keep the law, judge thee who by the letter and circumciſion doſt tranſgreſs the law? For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumciſion which is outward in the fleſh; But he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumciſion is that of the heart in the Spirit and not in the letter, whoſe praiſe is not of men but of God*; ver. 25. to the end. In the iii*d* chapter to the *Galatians* he argues, that the *Jewiſh* religion having been thus inſtituted only to prepare men for that Obedience to the eternal Law of God, which was to be the ſumm and eſſence of the Chriſtian Religion; it follows that when this latter and more perfect inſtitution took place, there was no need of continuing the former: *The law*, ſaith he, was *added only becauſe of tranſgreſſions, till the ſeed ſhould come, to whom the promiſe was made*; *v.* 19 and 23: *and before faith came, men having been kept under the law, ſhut up only unto the faith which ſhould afterwards be revealed*; *Wherefore the law was our Schoolmaſter to bring us unto Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by faith*; *But therefore, after that faith was come, they were no longer to be under That Law.* That

Thirdly; The Religion of *Abraham* was acceptable to God, *before* the *giving* of the Law; the Scripture ſaying expreſly that the Goſpel was preached *before* unto *Abraham:* and conſequently it could not but be acceptable likewiſe, *after* the *aboliſhing* of the Law.

Laſtly; That by the poſterity of *Abraham*, were not meant ſtrictly thoſe who deſcended from *Abraham* according to the fleſh; but the children of the promiſe (that is, *as many as are of the faith of Abraham*) *ſhall be counted for the ſeed*: *That* the true religion therefore and ſervice of God, was not to be confined always to the nation of the *Jews*, who were the poſterity of *Abraham* according to the fleſh; but the *Gentiles* alſo, which believe, have attained to righteouſneſs, *even the righteouſneſs which is of faith*; That is; Thoſe of all nations as well *Gentiles* as *Jews*, who embrace the Goſpel, which is the ſame with the Religion of *Abraham*, ſhall be juſtified with faithful *Abraham*. And this Argument the Apoſtle inſiſts upon in the ix*th*, x*th*, and xi*th* chapters of the Epiſtle to the *Romans*, and in the iv*th* to the *Galatians*. Theſe are the ſumm of the Arguments which the Apoſtle makes uſe of in theſe two Epiſtles, to prove againſt the Judaizing Chriſtians, that there was no neceſſity of retaining the *Jewiſh* Religion together with the Chriſtian. And from the largeneſs, ſtrength, and force of theſe Arguments we have again another convincing proof, that the determination of this queſtion is indeed the principal, if not the only ſcope and deſign of the Apoſtle in theſe Epiſtles: For nothing can be more abſurd than to ſuppoſe, that the Apoſtle ſhould moſt ſtrongly and largely demonſtrate a thing which he did not deſign to write about at all; or on the other hand that he ſhould deſign to write about a thing and make it the ſubject of his Diſcourſe, and yet prove it by ſuch intricate and obſcure arguments, as the wiſeſt and cunningeſt of men ſhould never be able to reconcile either with the reſt of the Scripture or with themſelves. And theſe are they, who in the ix*th* chapter to the *Romans*, and in ſo many other miſtaken places of theſe Epiſtles, are called predeſtinate, elect, the election and the like.

And now from what has been ſaid, I ſhall, in order to practice, draw two or three uſeful inferences; and ſo conclude. And

1ſt; From hence it appears, that tho' the eſſence of Religion be eternally and immutably the ſame, yet the form and inſtitution of it may be and often has been changed. The eſſence of all Religion is obedience to that moral and eternal Law, which

which obliges us to imitate the Life of God in juſtice, mercy, and holineſs, that is, to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world. This is the ſumm of natural Religion, as appears from the Diſcourſes of thoſe wiſer Heathens, who were freeſt from prejudice and ſuperſtition; This was the ſumm of the *Jewiſh* Religion, as appears from the frequent and earneſt proteſtations of God to that people, by his ſervants the Prophets; and this alſo is the ſumm of Chriſtian Religion, as St. *Paul* expreſly aſſerts; *Tit.* ii. 12. But though Religion itſelf be thus immutably the ſame, yet the form and inſtitution thereof may be different. When natural Religion, becauſe of its difficulty and obſcurity in the preſent corrupt eſtate of human nature, proved ineffectual to make men truly religious; God left them no longer to the guidance of their reaſon only, but gave them firſt the Patriarchal and afterwards the Moſaick diſpenſation; and when This alſo, by reaſon of its being burdened with ſo many ritual obſervances, proved ineffectual to the ſame great end, God aboliſhed This form of Religion alſo, and inſtituted the Chriſtian. In all which proceeding there is no reflection at all upon the immutable nature of God: For as the divine nature is in the trueſt and higheſt ſenſe unchangeable, ſo Religion itſelf in its nature and eſſence is likewiſe unchangeable: But as the capacities, the prejudices, and the circumſtances of men are different; ſo the inſtitution and outward form of that Religion, which in its eſſence is always the ſame, may be and hath been changed by the good pleaſure of God. SERM. LXXVIII.

2*dly*; If the whole and only deſign of St. *Paul*, in theſe Epiſtles, to the *Romans* and *Galatians*, be to prove, that God *hath* indeed made this change, of the inſtitution, of Religion from the *Jewiſh* to the Chriſtian; and to vindicate his juſtice in ſo doing; then we ought never ſo to underſtand any paſſages in theſe Epiſtles, as if the Apoſtle deſigned to magnify *one* Chriſtian *Virtue* in oppoſition to all or any of the reſt; but only that he would ſet forth the perfection of the Virtues of the *Chriſtian* Religion, without the ceremonies of the *Jewiſh*. Thus when he tells us that we are juſtified by faith without works, we muſt by no means interpret it, as ſome have abſurdly done, of the Faith of the Chriſtian Religion in oppoſition to the Works of the Chriſtian Religion; but of the Faith of the Goſpel, in oppoſition to the external works of the *Jewiſh* Law: For ſo the Apoſtle himſelf expreſly explains it; *Gal.* v. 6; *In Chriſt Jeſus neither circumciſion availeth any thing nor uncircumciſion, but faith which worketh by love: i.e.* it is now of no importance whether a man obſerves the works of the *Jewiſh* Religion or no, if he maintains but the faith and the obedience of the Chriſtian. But as to the Works of the Chriſtian Religion, the ſame Apoſtle every where urgeth *their* neceſſity; and particularly the five laſt chapters of the Epiſtle to the *Romans*, are a moſt earneſt exhortation to be fruitful therein.

3*dly*; From hence it follows that there is no contradiction between St. *Paul* and St. *James*, when the one ſays, that *a man is juſtified by faith without works*, and the other ſays, that *faith without works cannot juſtify*; For the one ſpeaking profeſſedly of the works of the *Jewiſh* Religion, and the other of the works of the Chriſtian, it is plain that the Faith of the Chriſtian Religion may avail to juſtify a man without the Works of the *Jewiſh* Religion, which is the aſſertion of St. *Paul*; though it cannot do ſo without the works of the Chriſtian Religion, which is the aſſertion of St. *James*; So that there is no other difference between theſe two great Apoſtles, than as if a man ſhould ſay, that believing the Chriſtian Religion is ſufficient to ſalvation without obeying the law of *Moſes*, but that it cannot be ſo without obeying the commands of Chriſt.

Fourthly; From hence we may infer, that when any two paſſages of Scripture ſeem contrary one to another, whereof the one be controverſial, and the other plain and moral; we muſt always endeavour to accommodate the controverſial paſſage to the plain one, and not the plain one to the controverſial. And the Reaſon is evident; becauſe the plain moral paſſage cannot be miſtaken, being interpreted according to the moſt obvious and literal ſenſe; but the ſenſe of the controverſial paſſage cannot be rightly underſtood, without underſtanding the particular controverſy about which it was written.

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Fifthly and *Laſtly*; If St. *Paul* ſo ſeverely treated the Judaizing Chriſtians, as to call them perverters of the Goſpel of Chriſt, and eſteem them as preachers of another Goſpel; then let us alſo take heed leſt on the authority of men we preach or obey at any time any other Goſpel, than what Chriſt and his Apoſtles preached and obeyed. If thoſe men, who together with the ſimplicity and ſpiritual nature of the Chriſtian Religion, would needs retain alſo thoſe ceremonial obſervances which God himſelf had appointed under the *Jewiſh* diſpenſation; were accounted ſo much to trouble the Church of God, that the Apoſtle declares that though it were an *Angel* from Heaven that ſhould preach any ſuch doctrine, he ſhould be accurſed: then let *us* take care, leſt in a higher degree we be found guilty of the ſame crime, if with the great and moral duties, thoſe weightier matters of the law, we not only equal the outward and ceremonial part of Religion, but alſo prefer it before them; accounting our ſelves ſufficiently religious if we have but the *form* of Godlineſs, though we deny the *power* thereof. But let no man deceive you, ſaith St. *John*; He that *doth* righteouſneſs, *and he only*, ſhall be accounted righteous in the ſight of God.

SERMON

SERMON LXXIX.

The Practice of Virtue the greateſt Security againſt our Enemies.

1 PETER iii. 13.

And who is he that will harm you, if you be followers of that which is good.

THE Apoſtle having in the former part of this chapter exhorted us to the practice of ſeveral particular duties; proceeds in the 10*th* Verſe, to enforce his exhortations with *ſuch* motives, as are apt to work *moſt* effectually on the minds of men: He inforces it with the conſideration of the *bleſſing* and *happineſs*, that attends the performance of thoſe duties. *He that will love life*, ſaith he, *and ſee good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they ſpeak no guile; let him eſchew evil and do good, let him ſeek peace and enſue it; for the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are opened unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is againſt them that do evil.* To which words, cited out of the xxxiv*th* Pſalm, the Apoſtle adds in the words of the Text, *And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?* The word in the original ſignifies indifferently, either *will* or *ſhall* harm you; and ſo the Text plainly contains

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tains this double propoſition: That if a man be a follower of that which is good, it is *probable* Men *will* not have any *deſire* to harm him; and if they *would*, yet it is *certain* no man *ſhall* have any *power* to do it: It is the moſt likely method to make all men our *friends*; and if it does not that, yet it is the moſt certain ſecurity that they ſhall not be able to hurt us, though they be enemies.

I. *Firſt*; If a man be a follower of that which is good, *i. e.* a ſincere practiſer of univerſal righteouſneſs, it is probable no man *will* have any *deſire* to harm him. And that for theſe two Reaſons; 1*ſt*, becauſe God in the wiſe diſpenſations of his Providence does frequently incline mens hearts to be favourable to thoſe that are truly and ſincerely good; And 2*dly*, becauſe Goodneſs does of its own nature, tend to the gaining mens affections, and making them our friends.

1*ſt*, God himſelf, in the wiſe diſpenſations of his providence, does frequently incline mens hearts to be favourable to thoſe who are truly and ſincerely good; Whether he does this at any time directly by his own immediate power, or by the ſecret diſpoſition of natural and ſecond cauſes; by the interpoſition of more or fewer inſtruments; or without uſing any at all, is not material to enquire; for *natural* cauſes are but *his* inſtruments. Certain it is, that he in whoſe hand the hearts of all men are, as the Scripture every where teſtifies, can, when he pleaſes, by *any* of theſe ways, give us favour in their Sight, and make even our Enemies to be at peace with us.

Secondly, Virtue and Goodneſs does in its own nature tend to the gaining mens affections, and making them our friends; it forceth neceſſarily a certain love and veneration from all men, and challengeth honour even from thoſe who will not imitate what they are forced to reſpect; So that he who is truly and ſincerely virtuous, muſt be, as moſt certainly acceptable to God, ſo in all probability approved of men. *Prov.* iii. 3, 4; *Let not mercy and truth forſake thee; bind them about thy neck, write them upon the table of thine heart: So ſhalt thou find favour and good underſtanding, in the ſight of God and Man.* The practice of Virtue and true Religion, is a conformity to thoſe eternal rules of juſtice and righteouſneſs, which are as unchangeable as the difference of Good and Evil, being founded in the nature of God and of things: It is alſo an imitation of the actions of God himſelf. And as no man is ſo ſtupid as not to admire the perfections of the divine nature, when he conſiders them abſtractedly in God, ſo he cannot but pay a proportionable reſpect to whatever he ſees bear their reſemblance in men. Hence virtue is of all things upon Earth the moſt lovely and venerable; approving it ſelf whether men will or no, to their Reaſon and Judgment: And eſpecially where it is moſt conſpicuous; as in the Lives of virtuous and religious Governors, who then moſt illuſtriouſly appear the true Vicegerents of God, when That Power which they receive *from* him, they imploy and exerciſe in imitation *of* him. But it is likewiſe true in proportion, even in the *meaneſt* perſons, that Virtue and Piety, wherever they are found, neceſſarily command eſteem and honour: And this not only from good and religious men; but even vicious perſons themſelves, though they will not *do* righteouſneſs, yet commonly they cannot forbear giving it its true character and commendation in others. The Officers who were ſent out by the Phariſees to apprehend our Saviour, could not forbear declaring, that he ſpake as never man ſpake; and the *Roman* Governor, when he gave Sentence that he ſhould be crucified, could not at the ſame inſtant forbear openly profeſſing that he found no fault in him. The very worſt of men cannot chuſe but have *a good Opinion* of that virtue, which the dominion of their luſts will not *ſuffer them to practiſe, or which their preſent temporal Intereſt* compels them to diſcountenance. In any buſineſs of importance, much rather would they imploy a righteous and conſcientious perſon, than any of the companions and partakers of their Vices. In a Word, they cannot but frequently wiſh that they themſelves were the men they are not; and pray with *Balaam*, that though they imitate not the *life*, yet at leaſt they might *die the death of the Righteous, and that their laſt end might be like his.*

Further, Religion and Virtue *muſt* naturally tend to the gaining mens affections and making them our friends; becauſe it renders a man evidently both a profitable member of the publick, and likewiſe uſeful to all men in whatever *private* relation they ſtand to him. It makes him modeſt and humble, peaceable and ſubmiſſive

to

to his *ſuperiors*, in all juſt and reaſonable inſtances. To his *equals* he is juſt and faithful, uſing all plainneſs and ſincerity in his dealings: In his converſation injuring and abuſing no man; but with gentleneſs and forgiveneſs, melting the hearts even of his enemies, and making them to be at peace with him. To his *inferiors* he is gentle and condeſcending; not oppreſſing the weak, nor dealing hardly with thoſe that are under his Power; but incouraging them by his example in the ways of Virtue, and in all kind of exigencies, aſſiſting and relieving them to the utmoſt of his Ability. This is the behaviour of a truly religious perſon in all relations; a behaviour, which not only gains eſteem as far as its good effects actually extend, but which raiſes admiration in us even when we meet with it in the Hiſtory of paſt and far diſtant ages, where it is manifeſt we can have no concern for the events of things, nor prejudices concerning the Characters of Perſons: Nay, which we cannot but commend, even though it happens to be *againſt* our preſent Intereſt; for the ſame reaſon, as on the contrary men cannot but hate baſe actions and diſlike unworthy Perſons, even at the ſame time that perhaps they profit by them. But here it is obvious to inquire; If theſe things be ſo, how then comes it to paſs that good men have ſo often been hated and perſecuted in the world? How comes it to paſs that men zealous and eminent for Piety, have in all ages ſuffered ſo much upon the account of Virtue and true Religion? Upon this it may be proper to obſerve, 1*ſt*, that All ſufferings even of men zealouſly religious, are not upon the account of God and Religion. If men through Heat and falſe Zeal, factiouſly at any time diſturb the peace, the order and quiet of their Country; if they ſeditiouſly oppoſe lawful Authority, and ſpread Doctrines inconſiſtent with civil Government, or with good Manners; ſuch as are ſeveral of the principles, and has frequently been the practice of the Church of *Rome*; and be puniſhed for ſo doing; this is not ſuffering for Virtue's ſake. 2*dly*, It is to be obſerved, that when the beſt and moſt truly pious men are hated and perſecuted, it is not becauſe Virtue it ſelf is not always amiable, but becauſe the perſecutors miſtake through their own wicked prejudices, and look upon the beſt of men as profane and irreligious. Of this kind were all the perſecutions of the beſt and pureſt Chriſtians in the primitive times: It is certain theſe men were eminently virtuous and religious, and it is certain they ſuffered merely upon that account; but then it is alſo as certain, that thoſe by whom they ſuffered, did not perſecute them becauſe they thought them religious, but becauſe through their own idolatrous and wicked prejudices they took them for perſons moſt profane. They did not perſecute them becauſe they thought them to be worſhippers of the *true* God, but becauſe they found them to be deſpiſers of their *falſe* ones. This made them implacably perſecute that Doctrine, the evidence and conviction, the Holineſs and excellency of which, if they would have opened their eyes, they could not poſſibly have reſiſted. Another Reaſon likewiſe why the beſt of Men may be inſulted and perſecuted, is becauſe it may happen to ſerve a preſent private intereſt of thoſe who oppreſs them; notwithſtanding that at the ſame time it cannot be denied, but in their judgment and conſcience they muſt honour and reſpect them. This was plainly the caſe, in the condemnation of our Saviour. He was manifeſtly innocent of the crimes laid to his charge, and *Pilate* knew him to be ſo; but then it is alſo manifeſt that he did not condemn him becauſe he was innocent, but becauſe he was willing to do the *Jews* a pleaſure. Our Saviour's innocence was ſufficient to convince the mind of his Judge, and it was only intereſt that prevailed over the force of that conviction. But 3*dly*, Suppoſing none of theſe to be the caſe; and that good men are ſometimes perſecuted and hated for this very reaſon only becauſe they are known to *be* ſuch; (which I think rarely happens:) yet *ſtill*, (as in all moral Maxims, it is ſufficient if they hold true for the greater part,) yet *ſtill*, I ſay, Virtue is undoubtedly the moſt direct, the *moſt* certain and effectual means in the world, to gain the love and favour of all men, though poſſibly it may ſometimes fail of obtaining that effect. *A ſoft Anſwer*, ſaith *Solomon*, *turneth away wrath*, and it is certain that it is the moſt probable way to do it; though there may perhaps be ſome men in the world of ſo ill a diſpoſition, that they will rather be inflamed than ſoftened by the gentleſt Entreaties. In like manner it is viſible there may be, and it is too certain there have been and are ſome perſons of ſo very

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ill a Spirit, that they will hate and perſecute a righteous man for no other reaſon, but becauſe they know him to be ſo: And therefore it muſt not be affirmed that religion and piety will every where at all times certainly and infallibly gain the favour and good will of all men, but only that it is the moſt probable and rational means that can poſſibly be uſed to that end, and that in moſt caſes it really does ſo, tho' it will indeed ſometimes prove otherwiſe. For this reaſon the Apoſtle, when he had ſaid in the words of the Text, *Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?* adds immediately in the next words, *But and if ye ſuffer for righteouſneſs ſake, happy are ye, and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled*; *i. e.* if ye be truly virtuous and religious, it is probable and you may reaſonably expect that men will love and reſpect you; but if it ſhould happen otherwiſe, as it will ſometimes do; if you ſhould be hated and perſecuted for Righteouſneſs ſake, let not this trouble or diſquiet you; yea, rather think your ſelves happy, that you are accounted worthy to ſuffer for God, that is, for Virtue or Truth's ſake; who can and will deliver you in his good time from your enemies, or if he does it not in this world, will reward you abundantly in the next. For,

II. *Secondly*; If we be followers of that which is good, it is certain no man, whatever his *will* be, ſhall have any *power* to do us any real harm: The Truth of which may appear from the following conſiderations.

1ſt, That the Providence of God does in a peculiar manner watch over the Righteous, to preſerve them under All Events. *The Eyes of the Lord*, ſays Solomon, *are in every place, beholding the evil and the good*; Prov. xv. 3. As he at firſt created, ſo he ſtill upholds, and rules all things by the word of his power; He orders and governs all the motions in the great fabrick of the world, and directs the operations of all cauſes to the effecting his deſigns. Whom he protects, no force or counſel can hurt; *for he breaketh the arms of the mighty, and bringeth the counſel of the wicked to nought.* When *Sennacherib* the *Aſſyrian* came againſt *Jeruſalem* with that mighty hoſt, he could *put his hook in his noſe, and his bridle in his lips, and cauſe him to return by the ſame way that he came*; and when *Balak* King of *Moab*, truſting more to his Policy than Strength, ſent for *Balaam* to curſe the *Iſraelites*, he could turn that curſe into a bleſſing: So that there was no inchantment againſt *Jacob*, nor divination againſt *Iſrael*. Indeed the whole hiſtory of the *Jewiſh* nation, from the coming out of *Egypt*, to their final captivity, is one continued and eminent inſtance of providence watching over the righteous. *In the wilderneſs God led them like ſheep, and kept them as the apple of his eye; He ſuffered no man to do them wrong, but reproved even Kings for their ſake.* When they came to enter into the promiſed Land, no force was able to ſtand before them; and when they were poſſeſſed of it, no nation was able to drive them out. Particularly when the whole body of them went up to *Jeruſalem* to appear before the Lord thrice in the year, their land was by a peculiar providence preſerved from being invaded, as was promiſed them, *Exod.* xxxiv. 24. In a word; ſo long as they kept God's Commandments, ſo that *he did not behold iniquity in* Jacob, *neither had ſeen perverſeneſs in* Iſrael; they were conſtantly happy and dwelt ſafely; and tho' we often read indeed that they were oppreſſed by their enemies and brought to great diſtreſs, yet this never happened but when they had firſt departed from their integrity; which made *Moſes* break out into that affectionate exclamation, *Deut.* xxxii. 30; *How ſhould one chace a thouſand, and two put ten thouſand to flight, except their rock had ſold them, and the Lord had ſhut them up!* Now the ſame Providence that preſerves whole nations, watches likewiſe proportionably over ſingle perſons; For ſo we read of *David*, 2 Sam. viii. 6, *that the Lord preſerved him whitherſoever he went*; And though under the Goſpel diſpenſation, where immortality is more clearly brought to light, and the promiſe of eternal life more expreſs; temporal rewards and protection do not ſo conſtantly attend the Righteous; yet does Providence by no means wholly neglect them even *here*: But God's eyes are ſtill upon the ways of man, and he ſeeth all their goings. *Are not two Sparrows*, ſays our Saviour, *ſold for a farthing? and one of them ſhall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbred*; St. Matt. x. 29.

2dly, The enemies of a righteous man cannot do him any real harm, becauſe they cannot take from him any thing wherein his true and proper Happineſs conſiſts.

His

His Happineſs conſiſts in imitating God, the Fountain and Spring of *all* Happineſs; and by copying out the divine perfections in a holy life, to become partaker of the divine nature: Nor can any thing poſſibly make him miſerable, but what ſeparates him from the favour and from the likeneſs of God. Chriſtians indeed are not Stoicks, nor can they be altogether inſenſible of what happens to them in the preſent life; ſo that did they wholly depend on that preſence of mind, that ſufficiency which Virtue does of its own nature furniſh the Soul with, it muſt after all be confeſſed, that the troubles and calamities of this life, notwithſtanding all the boaſts of ſome vain-glorious Philoſophers, would be very grievous to them. But then if all theſe afflictions ſhall be abundantly recompenſed to them both in this world and the next; if there be no man who has left father or mother, or houſes or lands, for Chriſt's ſake, who ſhall not in this preſent ſtate receive not only equivalents but an hundred-fold, and in the end eternal life; where *then* is the real miſchief of theſe loſſes? Perſecution may deprive ſuch perſons of their preſent poſſeſſions; but it cannot deſpoil them of thoſe *bags that wax not old, that treaſure laid up for them in the heavens, where moth and ruſt corrupt not, and where thieves break not through and ſteal.* It may deprive them of all the comforts of this life, and even life itſelf; but it cannot hinder them of that eternal inheritance, the joyful expectation of which keeps them from being miſerable here, as the enjoyment of it will make them for ever happy hereafter. For in the

3*d* and *laſt* place, whatever loſs a good man ſuſtains in the world upon the account of his concern for Truth and Virtue, ſhall be abundantly made good to him in that which is to come; and conſequently it is ſo far from doing him any real harm, that it ought rather to be accounted a Gain than a Loſs. *For our Light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*; 2 Cor. iv. 17: and St. *Paul* accounts, Rom. viii. 18; *that the ſufferings of this preſent time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which ſhall be revealed in us.* The *New Teſtament* is every where exceeding full and expreſs in this matter; though indeed in the *Old Teſtament* theſe promiſes are not ſo very clear; The reaſon whereof, ſeems to be this. The *Jews* were a peculiar nation choſen of God to be a ſtanding inſtance of his providence in the government of the world, and of his rewarding Virtue and puniſhing Vice; the promiſes therefore and threatnings upon their obedience or diſobedience, were made to that nation conſidered as a body politick, and therefore muſt of neceſſity have been ſuch as could belong to a nation as ſuch, and be conſpicuous to the world; *i. e.* they muſt needs have been temporal. That national Sins can be puniſhed only with temporal puniſhments, is not indeed a juſt obſervation: Becauſe national Sins are nothing but the Sins of the particular perſons that conſtitute a Nation; and therefore *may* receive their particular puniſhment in a future ſtate. But *ſuch* rewards or puniſhments of a Nation, as are intended to be *Inſtances of God's providence* in *this* World, and evidences of his governing a People, theſe it is manifeſt muſt of neceſſity be temporal. And this was plainly the caſe of the *Jews*, conſidered as a Nation. Of a future ſtate, where every individual perſon in particular, ſhould be rewarded or puniſhed according to his private behaviour, they had *ſufficient* proof, from thoſe daily and undeniable evidences which they peculiarly had of the Being and Providence of God; from God's Dealings with the Patriarchs, from the typical and figurative interpretation of their temporal promiſes; and from the preaching of their Prophets. But now the Goſpel-diſpenſation not being made to any particular nation or body of men as ſuch, but to all individual perſons; the bleſſings promiſed to obedience and the curſes threatned to diſobedience were to be ſuch as concerned particular perſons only; and therefore might as well relate to the future ſtate as the preſent. Hence rewards and puniſhments are not now ſo equally diſtributed in this life; that future ſtate being more clearly and fully diſcovered, wherein all inequalities of this kind ſhall be ſet right, and where God has promiſed that they who ſuffer with Chriſt, ſhall be alſo glorified with him: So far therefore are wicked men from being able to hurt thoſe who are followers of that which is good, that even when they think they have gained their purpoſe, and have it in their power to ſatisfy their malice to the utmoſt; they even then contribute

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tribute to the happineſs of thoſe pious and religious perſons, whom they intend to make miſerable.

The Application of what has been ſaid, is evident. If by a ſincere endeavour after the performance of our duty in the general courſe of our lives, we have made God our friend; we are taught not to be afraid of any thing elſe. Let us truſt in *him* for deliverance under *Any* ſort of affliction whatſoever, who is abundantly *able*; and hath promiſed that he *will* preſerve us, ſo that nothing ſhall by any means hurt us. *He that dwelleth in the ſecret place of the moſt high*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *i. e.* he that feareth God, *ſhall abide under the ſhadow of the Almighty*; *i. e.* under his ſecure protection. *Surely he ſhall deliver thee from the ſnare of the fowler, and from the noiſome peſtilence; He ſhall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings ſhalt thou truſt, his truth ſhall be thy ſhield and buckler*; Pſal. xci. ver. 1: and *Job* v. 19, *&c*; *He ſhall deliver thee from ſix troubles, yea, in ſeven there ſhall no evil touch thee. In famine he ſhall redeem thee from Death; and in War, from the Power of the Sword. Thou ſhalt be hid from the Scourge of the Tongue; neither ſhalt thou be afraid of Deſtruction when it cometh. And fear ye not the reproach of men*, ſaith the Prophet; *neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth ſhall eat them up like a garment, and the worm ſhall eat them like wool; but my righteouſneſs ſhall be for ever, and my ſalvation from generation to generation*; Iſai. ii. 7, 8. Let us therefore endeavour by ſincerity and univerſal righteouſneſs and goodneſs, to make all men our friends; or at leaſt, if it will not have that effect, let us thereby ſecure our ſelves that they ſhall not be able to hurt us though they be enemies; Let us by a life of piety and true holineſs, make our peace with God; and then we need not fear what men can do unto us: To conclude, let us ſecure to our ſelves a portion in that happineſs which is to come, and then if we be not delivered from ſufferings and afflictions here, they ſhall (which is much better than deliverance) be compenſated at laſt by that felicity, which will go as far beyond our expectation, as all temporal enjoyments come ſhort of it; and will exceed even our imagination no leſs than our hope. For *Eye has not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither have entred into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

SERMON

SERMON LXXX.

Of the Nature and Extent of falſe Witneſs.

PROV. xxiv. 28, 29.

Be not a Witneſs againſt thy Neighbour without Cauſe, and deceive not with thy Lips: Say not, I will do to Him, as He hath done to Me; I will render to the man according to his Works.

THERE is nothing generally more dear and valuable to men, than their reputation or good Name: *Prov.* xxii. 1; *A good name is rather to be choſen than great Riches, and loving Favour rather than ſilver and gold.* The Eſteem of wiſe and good men, is the greateſt of all *Temporal* Encouragements to Virtue; and it is a Mark of an abandoned Spirit, to have no Regard to it. *One* caſe indeed there is, wherein the opinion of the World is not to be regarded: Which is, when the Circumſtances of things are ſuch, that the *adhering to Truth and Virtue* will neceſſarily expoſe a man to the Reproaches of *ill* men, and to the miſtaken Cenſures of Many alſo who perhaps otherwiſe are *good*. In *This* caſe, *Bleſſed are ye*, ſays our Saviour, *when men ſhall revile you, and perſecute you, and ſhall ſay all manner of evil againſt you falſely for my ſake: Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your Reward in Heaven; For ſo perſecuted they the Prophets* Matt. v. 11.

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which were before you. But in all *other* caſes, Reputation or a good Name is juſtly to be valued. It is what the wiſeſt and beſt men, have always been very tender of preſerving *in themſelves*; and what good Chriſtians ought therefore to make great Conſcience of taking wrongfully from *Others*. In *ſome* Inſtances, a clear reputation has been eſteemed more valuable even than Life itſelf; and, in many circumſtances, deſpoiling men of their good name, is in effect the ſame thing as defrauding them of their Property. So much *reputation*, is always ſo much *Power*; and according to mens Eſteem and Credit in the World, ſo much proportionably is their Influence and the Weight they have in it. For the ſame reaſons therefore, that we are obliged not to injure our Neighbour in his *Perſon* or *Property*; for the ſame reaſons ought we to be very tender, of his *good name* and *reputation*: Always having a juſt Regard to Truth and Charity, and to the Benefit and Advantage of the Publick. *Be not a Witneſs againſt thy Neighbour without Cauſe, and deceive not with thy Lips: Say not, I will do to Him, as He has done to Me; I will render to the man according to his Works.*

Who is meant by our *Neighbour*, in *This* and *all other* Precepts of the like nature; our Saviour has explained to us in his Parable of the *good Samaritan*. Where, by declaring *Him* to be the afflicted man's *Neighbour*, who, though a *Stranger*, though a *Foreigner*, though of a *different Sect and Party* from him both in *religion* and *polity*, yet aſſiſted and ſaved him in a time of extreme diſtreſs; he ſhows us that our *Neighbours*, in the Senſe of the divine Precepts, are not Thoſe only who *dwell near us*, or with whom we chance to have particular *Acquaintance*, or who are of the *ſame Sect* or Denomination with ourſelves; but *whomſoever* among *all Mankind* we have any Concern with; *whomſoever* it happens at any time to be in our Power either to *injure* or *do kindneſs* to; in a word, *whoſoever* can in any reſpect become the *better* or the *worſe*, or receive any *Hurt* or any *Benefit*, by our *Behaviour* towards them. This is the meaning of the word, *Neighbour*, in *Scripture-language*, and in the *religious* eſtimation of things: and in *This* ſenſe it is to be underſtood in the *Text*, and in all *other* moral exhortations; *Be not a Witneſs againſt thy Neighbour without cauſe, and deceive not with thy Lips.*

The word which we here render, *deceive*; ſignifies, in the original, *any* damage, *any* inconvenience, brought upon a man in the way of ſlander, calumny, back-biting, or any other injurious manner of repreſenting him. The ſenſe of the expreſſion is the ſame as in That *Other* Paſſage in the ſame book, ch. xxvi. 18; *As a mad-man who caſteth Firebrands, arrows, and death; ſo is the man that* deceiveth *his Neighbour*, (that is, who *revileth, defameth*, or leads his Neighbour into *Any Miſchief*,) *and ſaith, Am not I in ſport?*

The Meaning of the particular Phraſes in the Text, being thus explained; I ſhall, in the following Diſcourſe, *Firſt*, ſet forth the *Nature and Extent* of the *Sin* here forbidden; together with the proper *limitation* of the Caſes and Circumſtances, to which it *does* or does *not extend*. And *Secondly*, I ſhall alledge the ſuitable *Reaſons and Motives*, which ought to influence our Practice in this matter. *Be not a Witneſs againſt thy Neighbour without cauſe, and deceive not with thy Lips: Say not, I will do to Him, as He has done to Me; I will render to the man according to his Works.*

I. *Firſt*; In the *firſt* place, the Higheſt and moſt enormous degree of the Sin here forbidden, is the deliberately giving *falſe evidence* in *judicial* matters, whether *criminal*, or in caſes relating to *Property*. Exod. xxiii. 1; *Put not thine hand with the wicked, to be an unrighteous Witneſs.* This is a wickedneſs of ſo high a nature, and in which it is ſo impoſſible for any man's conſcience to be deceived; that no man can be guilty of it in Any caſe, who has at all even the leaſt *Pretence* or *Appearance* of Religion. We find an Inſtance of it in *Ahab*'s conſenting to the inſtructions given by *Jezebel* againſt *Naboth*, 1 Kings xxi. 10; *Set two men, ſons of Belial, before him, to bear Witneſs againſt him, ſaying, Thou didſt blaſpheme God and the King; and then carry him out, and ſtone him, that he may die.* The Character given him by the Prophet upon which account, *ver.* 20; is, that he *had Sold himſelf to work evil in the ſight of the Lord:*

Another degree of the Vice condemned in the Text, is when men bear falſe Teſtimony againſt their Brethren, not indeed with the Solemnity of a judicial accuſation

ſation before the Magiſtrate, but after a more ſecret manner, in private converſa- SERM.
tion; ſpreading *knowingly* and *maliciouſly*, *Falſe* Reports concerning any perſon, LXXX.
either for ſome *Private Advantage* to *Themſelves*, or out of *Envy* towards *Him*, or
in way of *Revenge* for ſome conceived *Diſobligation*. This is the caſe ſuppoſed in the Text: *Be not a Witneſs againſt thy Neighbour without Cauſe:* —— *Say not, I will do to Him, as He has done to Me; I will render to the Man according to his Works.* But whether *Revenge*, or whatever elſe, be the *Temptation* to the Practice; the nature of the *Sin itſelf* is of the deepeſt Die, and condemned among the moſt deteſtable Crimes both by Reaſon and Scripture. *All Lyars ſhall have their part in the lake that burneth with Fire and Brimſtone*; Rev. xxi. 8. And Our Saviour, who never ſpake with Severity, but againſt Great Crimes; told the Phariſees, when they ſpread falſe and malicious Accuſations againſt him, that they imitated herein *their Father the Devil*, Joh. viii. 44; That the *Devil* was *himſelf a Lyar* from the Beginning, a *Lyar*, in the ſenſe of ſpreading *falſe Accuſations*; (ſo the word, διάβολος, properly ſignifies:) And that he was the *Father*, and *Promoter*, *of it* in *Others*.

But further, there are ſtill *lower degrees* of the Fault reproved in the Text; which, as they are leſs ſcandalous in the eye of the World, and leſs ſhocking to inconſiderate Minds, ſo there is more danger of mens falling into them, and greater Care needful to preſerve ourſelves from the guilt of them. Of This kind, is the *careleſs* and *raſh* Cuſtom of ſpreading cenſorious and uncharitable Reports to the diſadvantage of Our Neighbour, *without at all knowing* whether there be *any Truth* in the accuſation, or any *juſt Ground and Foundation* for the Cenſure. Under which Head, come innumerable ſorts of Calumny, Detraction, Slander, Evil-ſpeaking, Back-biting, Tale-bearing, raſh Judgment, and the like. In which matters, the *Occaſions*, upon which it is very incident *even* to thoſe who are *not* of malicious Tempers, to be faulty through *Negligence*, and Want of Care and Attention; the *Occaſions*, I ſay, which lead men to be faulty in This particular, are, in the courſe of common life, ſo *perpetually* returning; that the Scripture repreſents That perſon as a very *perfect* man indeed, who can be continually upon his Guard againſt This Error. *In many things* (ſays the Apoſtle) *we offend all: If any man offend not in Word, the ſame is a perfect man, and able alſo to bridle the Whole Body.* The Author of the Book of *Eccleſiaſticus* had *before* made the ſame Obſervation, *ch.* xix. 16; *There is one that ſlippeth in his Speech, but not from his Heart; and who is He that hath not offended with his tongue?* The Pſalmiſt in like manner, *Pſ.* xv. 1; *Lord, who ſhall dwell in thy tabernacle, or who ſhall reſt upon thy Holy Hill? Even —— He that hath uſed no deceit in his tongue, —— and hath not ſlandered his Neighbour.* The *Caution* therefore he thought *neceſſary*, to preſerve himſelf from *This Surprize*, is very remarkable: *I ſaid, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue:* And, *Set a Watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my Lips*; Pſ. cxli. 3. Without great conſideration and habitual ſerioufneſs, the *perpetual* Incidents of *This* temptation *will* betray men into Folly; and *In multitude of words there wanteth not Sin*; Prov. x. 19.

Laſtly; The *Laſt and Loweſt* Degree of the Fault we are now conſidering, is when men are *cenſorious* towards their Brethren, in ſpreading abroad things *neither falſe* nor *dubious*, but *certainly true*; yet *needleſsly*, and *contrary to the Laws of Charity:* Declaring their Neighbours *real* infirmities, or *real* Faults, to his Diſadvantage; without ſerving the purpoſe of Any true Benefit, either to *Him* or *Others*. This Practice was Thus forbidden under the Law, *Thou ſhalt not go up and down as a Tale-bearer among thy people*; Levit. xix. 16. And though the words of my Text, it is evident, have principal Regard to *falſe* accuſation; yet literally and very properly they extend alſo to *uncharitable* Truth: *Be not a Witneſs againſt thy Neighbour*, without Cauſe.

Indeed, in all Caſes where either the Adminiſtration of *publick Juſtice*, or the manifeſt Benefit and Advantage of *Private good Chriſtians*, requires it; In all *Theſe* caſes, it is mens *Duty* to accuſe Criminals of all Sorts, and to bear Teſtimony againſt them in Righteouſneſs and Truth: But in *other* caſes, it is evidently a Breach of Chriſtian Charity, to take delight in ſpreading even *True* Reports *needleſsly*, to the Damage or Diſadvantage of our Neighbour. In matters of *Private*

Offence,

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Offence, it is the part of a Chriſtian, *privately* to reprove the perſon offending: And the Benefit of ſo doing, may be very great. *Eccleſiaſticus* xix. 13; *Admoniſh a friend, it may be he hath not done it; and if he have done it, that he do it no more. Admoniſh thy Friend, it may be he hath not ſaid it; and if he have, that he ſpeak it not again. If thy Brother* (ſays our Saviour) *ſhall treſpaſs againſt thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he ſhall hear thee, thou haſt gained thy Brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more. — And if he ſhall neglect to hear Them, tell it unto the Church.* That is: Uſe all poſſible means, in the privateſt and moſt friendly manner, to amend and reform him: But if *This Method* proves unſucceſsful, then *tell it to the Church*, tell it to *the Congregation*, tell it to *a Number* of ſerious and well-diſpoſed Chriſtians; ſtill for the *Benefit of the perſon reproved*; that by the Advice and Exhortation of *Many*, he may be brought to Repentance. This is a thing very different from publiſhing mens Faults in ordinary converſation; Wherein generally there is No View, of amending the *perſon cenſured*; but merely of ſatisfying the Envy, Malice, Weakneſs, or vain Humour, of thoſe who are apt to imagine they can build up to *Themſelves* an *Eſteem* upon the *Faults* of *Others*. Nevertheleſs, even in common *converſation*, the Characters of Perſons are not to be confounded, as if no Difference was to be made between Virtue and Vice: But the ſenſe of what has been ſaid, is, that Chriſtians ought to be ſo *far* from bearing at any time *falſe* teſtimony againſt their Brethren, that, where no real Honour can be done to Virtue, or Diſcredit to Vice, they ought not to take pleaſure even in *Truth* uncharitable and not needful to be expoſed.

Having thus at large explained the *Nature and Extent* of the *Sin* forbidden in the Text, and ſet forth the proper *Limitations* of the Caſes and Circumſtances to which it *does* or does *not extend*; Which was the *Firſt* thing I propoſed: It remains now in the

II. *Second* place, that I proceed to lay before you ſome of the principal *Reaſons or Motives*, which ought to influence our Practice in this Matter. *Be not a Witneſs againſt thy Neighbour without cauſe, and deceive not with thy Lips.* And

1*ſt*; From the very *nature* and *conſtitution of human Society*, there ariſes originally, in the reaſon of things, a ſtrong argument why men ought to govern their *Words* as well as their *Actions*. For by the mutual intercourſe of *Both*, is human Society preſerved; and by injurious *Speech*, as well as by unjuſt *Actions*, is That general Truſt and Confidence, That mutual Charity and Good-Will deſtroyed, on which depends the Welfare and Happineſs of Mankind. This Argument is urged by St. *Paul*, Eph. iv. 25; *Putting away Lying, ſpeak every man Truth with his Neighbour; for we are* Members *one of another*. The conſtitution of *every* human *Society*, bears ſome Analogy to the Frame of the Natural *Body*: And as, in the *natural Body*, all Diviſion, Diſagreement, and Diſunion of the *Members*, tends neceſſarily to the deſtruction and diſſolution of the *Whole*; ſo, in proportion, in all *Communities* and *Societies of men* whatſoever, the *Contentions* and *Animoſities*, the *Diſorders* and *Diſtractions*, ariſing from *Slander, Calumny, Detraction, Uncharitableneſs*, and other Inſtances of licentious Speech, are inevitably of very pernicious effect. *The Tongue*, ſays St. *James*, (ch. iii. 5, 8,) *is a little member, and boaſteth great Things: Behold, how great a matter, a little fire kindleth: — it is an unruly evil, full of deadly Poiſon.*

Of miſchievous conſequence it often is, to the perſon himſelf who indulgeth this Folly: *Prov.* xviii. 7; xii. 13; xiii. 3; *A fool's Mouth is his deſtruction, and his lips are the ſnare of his Soul. — The wicked is ſnared by the tranſgreſſion of his Lips. He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his life; but he that openeth wide his lips, ſhall have deſtruction.* The Wiſe Authors of the Books of *Wiſdom* and *Eccleſiaſticus*, expreſs themſelves excellently upon This Head: *The Ear of Jealouſy heareth all things, and the Noiſe of Murmurings is not hid: Therefore — refrain your tongue from Back-biting; for there is no word ſo ſecret, that ſhall go for nought; and the mouth that belieth, ſlayeth the Soul. He that can rule his tongue, ſhall live without ſtrife; and he that hateth babling, ſhall have leſs evil: Rehearſe not unto another, that which is told unto thee; and thou ſhalt fare never the worſe: Whether it be to a friend or foe, talk not of other mens Lives; and if thou canſt without Offence, reveal them not: For*

Wiſd. i. 10.

Eccluſ. xix 6.

he

he heard and obſerved thee; and, when time cometh, he will hate thee: If thou haſt heard a word, let it die with thee; and be bold, it will not burſt thee. The natural *Puniſhment* therefore of a licentious and unbridled Tongue, is the *Inconveniencies* it is *very apt* to bring, in the *courſe* of things, upon the *Perſon himſelf*. *He that will love life, and ſee good days,* (he that will avoid innumerable *Snares and Troubles* which careleſs men bring upon *themſelves*;) *let him refrain his Tongue from Evil, and his Lips that they ſpeak no Guile*; 1 Pet. iii. 10: Otherwiſe, he will inevitably bring upon himſelf an uneaſy and unquiet Life.

This is the natural *ill conſequence* of this Practice, to the perſons themſelves who are guilty of it: But the Sinfulneſs of it, appears principally in the *Damage* it does ſecretly to Others. Slander, and uncharitable Defamation, is a *Peſtilence that walketh in Darkneſs*; and a ſecret Stab, againſt which there is many times no poſſibility of Defence. *Prov.* xviii. 8; *The Words of a tale-bearer are as Wounds, and they go down into the innermoſt parts of the Belly.* Again, (ch. xxvi. 18;) *As a mad-man who caſteth fire-brands, arrows, and death; ſo is the man that* deceiveth, (the man that *revileth*, that *defameth*) *his neighbour, and ſaith, Am not I in ſport?* As a matter of *ſport* or *diverſion*, he may fooliſhly make light of it; but the ill conſequences thereof are greater than can be foreſeen. *The Beginning of Strife*, ſays the wiſe man, *is as when one letteth out Water:* And, *As Coals are to burning Coals, and Wood to Fire; ſo is a contentious man to kindle Strife.*

This is an Argument drawn from the very *Nature* and *Conſtitution* of *human Society* in *general*. But

2*dly*; Another and a more powerful Motive to oblige men to reſtrain *licentious Speech*, is the conſideration of the inconſiſtency of it with a due Senſe of *Religion*. *If any man among you*, ſaith St. *James*, *ſeem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue*, ch. i. 26. *but deceiveth his own Heart, That man's religion is vain.* The reaſon is, becauſe a principal part of *pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this*; that ver. 27. men approve themſelves by *a* good converſation, *with* meekneſs *of Wiſdom*. *If* ch. iii. 13. *&c.* therefore, ſays he, *ye have bitter envying and ſtrife in your hearts, glory not and lie not againſt the Truth:* — *For where envying and ſtrife is, there is confuſion and every evil Work.* In like manner the Apoſtle St. *Paul*, among things inconſiſtent with, and contrary to, *the words of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the doctrine which is according to godlineſs*; reckons up *envy, ſtrife, railings, evil ſurmiſings*, and the like; 1 *Tim.* vi. 4. And accordingly exhorts, *Eph.* iv. 31; *Let all bitterneſs, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-ſpeaking be put away from you, with all Malice; And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Chriſt's ſake has forgiven you.* Nay, even in matters which might *in themſelves* ſeem to be of *ſmaller* importance, and *comparatively* ſpeaking, ſcarce to be taken Notice of; yet becauſe, *in conſequence*, they *quench the Spirit* of religion, and *diſſipate* the Effect and Influence of *ſerious conſideration*, therefore he reproves with great ſeverity ſuch perſons as *learn to be* idle; 1 *Tim.* v. 13; *wandering about from houſe to houſe*, being Tatlers *and Buſy-bodies, ſpeaking things which they ought not.*

3*dly* and *laſtly*; *Another* Argument againſt Calumny and Detraction, and *particularly* againſt *That Cenſoriouſneſs* which too naturally ariſes from *Differences in* opinions; is the conſideration of *ourſelves* being *All of us* ſubject to *error*. What our Saviour ſaid to the Phariſees in *Another* caſe, *He that is without Sin amongſt you, let him firſt caſt a Stone at her*; may no leſs juſtly be applied to *This*; He that is infallibly ſecured againſt all Errors *Himſelf*, let him be as cenſorious as he pleaſes upon the Miſtakes of *Others*. And if it be upon matters relating to *Religion*, that the *Reproach and Defamation* is founded; the Fault is ſtill the greater, and the more inexcuſable; becauſe it is preſumptuouſly anticipating the judgment of God towards *Others*, and provoking him the more ſeverely to judge *Us*. I ſpeak not here of the ill Character, which *is* and *ought* to be given of all *Open Vice* and *manifeſt Unrighteouſneſs*. But men who have different *Notions* and Apprehenſions of Things, are very apt to caſt Reproach upon each other, not for their *Vices*, but for their Different *Underſtandings*. And the ſame Frailty, which, in a man of the ſame *Sect or Party*, ſhall be no Blemiſh at all; ſhall, in a perſon of a different *Party*, be the moſt unpardonable Crime. The *Jews* thought every Fault in a *Samaritan* or a *Gentile*, to be infinitely greater than in one of their own Nation; and

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the ſmalleſt *Mote* in *another's* Eye, ſeemed much larger to them than a *Beam* in their *own*. This is what St. *Paul* reproves, *Rom.* ii. 1; *Thou art inexcuſable, O man, whoſoever thou art that judgeſt*; (ſpeaking of a *Jew* condemning a *Gentile*;) *for wherein thou judgeſt another, thou condemneſt thyſelf*. But this relates to Real *Faults*. The *greater* and ſtill *more* inexcuſable degree of this Partiality is, when men caſt reproach and contempt upon Others for what is truly *commendable*, for doing what perhaps was their *Duty* to do; for being *wiſer*, or more *charitable*, or more *ſcrupulous* and *conſcientious* than Themſelves. Of This, St. *Paul* ſpeaks, *Rom.* xiv. 4; *Who art thou that judgeſt another man's ſervant? to his Own Maſter he ſtandeth or falleth*? St. *James* calls it, *judging the Law itſelf*; ch. iv. 11; *He that ſpeaketh evil of his Brother, and judgeth his Brother, ſpeaketh evil of the Law, and judgeth the Law.* —— *There is one law-giver, who is able to ſave and to deſtroy: Who art thou, that judgeſt another? Our Saviour* forbids this cenſoriouſneſs towards *Others*, under the penalty of being more ſtrictly judged *Ourſelves: Judge not, that ye be not judged.* And if concerning opprobrious and reproachful language *to a man's face*, he ſays, *Whoſoever ſhall ſay unto his Brother, Thou fool, ſhall be in danger of hell-fire*; much *more* againſt malicious *Back-biting* and uncharitable *Detraction*, would he have uſed the like ſeverity of expreſſion. The reaſon is; becauſe ſuch kind of *Detraction* and *Defamation* is really more injurious, and more difficult to be guarded againſt, and of more extenſive Effect, than *many other* ways of doing wrong to our Neighbour. I conclude therefore with that declaration of our Lord, *Matt.* xii. 36; *I ſay unto you, that every idle word*, (that is, as appears evidently in the context, every *malicious* word) *that men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give account thereof in the day of Judgment: For by thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemned.*

SERMON LXXXI.

Of the Sin of deliberate Fraud.

ACTS v. 3, 4.

But Peter *said*, Ananias, *why has Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghoſt, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was ſold, was it not in thine own power? why haſt thou conceived this thing in thine Heart? Thou haſt not lied unto Men, but unto God.*

IN the three fore-going Chapters of This Book, we have an Account given us of the Simplicity and Purity of that Primitive Church, which was planted immediately by the *Apoſtles themſelves* upon their being inſpired with the Holy Ghoſt at Pentecoſt, and flouriſhed in the very Beginning even of *Their Days*. And the Character we find of it, is ſuch; as contains both a moſt juſt Reproof of the decaying Piety of Chriſtians in ſucceeding Ages, and at the ſame time affords us a lovely and venerable Idea of the ſincere and uncorrupt Manners of thoſe Primitive

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mitive Diſciples. *Ch.* ii. *ver.* 42; *They continued ſtedfaſtly in the Apoſtles Doctrine and Fellowſhip, and in breaking of Bread and in Prayers.* Ver. 44; *And all that believed, were together, and had all things common; And ſold their poſſeſſions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.* Expecting, as it appears, a ſpeedy Deſtruction of the *Jewiſh* Nation, and being as yet but a few ſcattered People, they agreed among themſelves to ſell every one what he had, and put it into one publick Stock, to be imployed in furniſhing out ſuch as were to be ſent abroad in the ſervice of preaching the Goſpel, and to be diſtributed likewiſe for the Maintenance of them that continued in *Jeruſalem* according to every man's Wants and Neceſſities. *Ver.* 46; *And they continued daily with one Accord in the Temple*; their Practice being, conſtantly to frequent the Temple at the uſual Hours of publick Prayer: *And breaking bread from Houſe to Houſe*, (In *the Houſe*, it ſhould be tranſlated; The Meaning is; meeting together in their *Private* Aſſembly to receive the Communion *among themſelves*, *after* they had prayed *in publick* with *the Jews*;) *they did eat their meat with Gladneſs and Singleneſs of Heart: Praiſing God, and having Favour with all the People*; that is, by their Innocency and Simplicity of manners, obtaining the good Opinion of all well diſpoſed and unprejudiced Perſons: According to that Admonition of St. *Paul*, *Rom.* xiv. 17; *The Kingdom of God, is —— Righteouſneſs and Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt*; *For he that in* Theſe *things ſerveth Chriſt, is acceptable to God and approved of Men.* At the latter end of the 4*th* Chapter, as an Introduction to the Hiſtory whereof my Text is a part, the *ſame* Character of that *Primitive Apoſtolical Church*, is repeated in *other* Words: *Ver.* 32; *And the Multitude of them that believed, were of one Heart, and of one Soul*; living in perfect Love, and entire Unity among themſelves; every one being more ſollicitous to provide for the Neceſſities of *others*, than to lay up any thing in ſtore for *Himſelf*; *neither ſaid any of them, that ought of the things which he poſſeſſed, was his own, but they had all things common.* Ver. 33; *And great* Grace, *was upon them all*; That is, as it is before expreſſed, *ch.* ii. 47, they *had* great *Favour with all the People:* For in the original it is the very ſame Word in *both* places; Great *Grace was upon them all*; *and* they had great *Favour* with all the people: (Which is a Phraſe of the ſame import, with That in *Luk.* ii. 52; *And Jeſus increaſed in Wiſdom and Stature, and in Favour with God and Man.*) Ver. 34; *Neither were there any among them, that lacked*; *For as many as were Poſſeſſors of Lands or Houſes, ſold them, and brought the Prices of the things that were ſold, and laid them down at the Apoſtles feet*; *and diſtribution was made unto every man, according as he had need.* Not that there was any abſolute *Obligation* or expreſs *Command* upon any Man ſo to do; But expecting as I before obſerved, a ſpeedy Deſtruction of the *Jewiſh* Nation, according to our Saviour's Prophecy; and being themſelves a ſcattered and perſecuted Body of Men; and having their Hearts filled with a moſt excellent ſpirit of univerſal Love and Charity; they either All, or at leaſt moſt of them, *voluntarily* agreed to ſell what they had; and, putting it into the Apoſtles hands, they were for the future equally maintained out of it, as by a publick Stock. And great was the Sincerity and Simplicity of Heart, wherewith the whole Body of the firſt Believers exerciſed this univerſal Benevolence. But, as even among the *Apoſtles themſelves* there had been *One* Son of Perdition; and in the very beſt and moſt excellent Inſtitutions, Offences *will* ariſe; ſo even *here* alſo there was an Attempt made, to introduce a Corruption. For one *Ananias* with his Wife *Sapphira*, ver. 1. of this chapter, having *ſold a Poſſeſſion, kept back part of the price, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the Apoſtles feet*; intending thereby ſo to impoſe upon the Apoſtles, as to be maintained, like the other Diſciples, out of the publick Stock of the Church, and yet at the ſame time retain a private portion of their Eſtate for themſelves. Upon this therefore St. *Peter* replies unto them in the Words of the Text; *Ananias, why has Satan filled thine Heart, to lie to the Holy Ghoſt, and to keep back part of the price of the land*; *Whilſt it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was ſold, was it not in thine own power*; *Why haſt thou conceived this thing in thine Heart? Thou haſt not lied unto Men, but unto God.* In the following Diſcourſe upon which Words, I ſhall *firſt* conſider briefly *in general*, what the Crime was, wherewith *Ananias* is here charged by the Apoſtle. *Secondly*, I ſhall conſider the ſeveral *Circumſtantial Aggravations* of the Crime, in *His* Caſe *in particular.*

particular. And *Thirdly*, I ſhall draw ſome *practical* Obſervations, which may be of perpetual Uſe to us, from the ſeveral Expreſſions contained in the Text. SERM. LXXXI.

I. *Firſt*, I am to conſider *in general*, *what* the Crime was, wherewith *Ananias* is here charged by the Apoſtle. And this is ſo plainly expreſt in the Words of the Text, that I ſuppoſe no man, who has read this Hiſtory without a Comment, ever miſtook it. The *Foundation* of his Crime, was *Covetouſneſs*; *the Effect* of that Covetouſneſs, was *Diffidence*, or a *Diſtruſt* of that Maintenance, which he was to enjoy in common with the whole Church; and the actual *Crime it ſelf*, which that Diffidence or covetous Diſpoſition put him upon committing, and which in the Text is more immediately charged upon him, is *Fraud*: A *Fraudulent Attempt* to deceive the Apoſtles, and the whole Church, by putting himſelf upon them to be maintained out of the Publick Expence, whilſt at the ſame time he retained privately to himſelf, that which ought to have been put into the publick Stock, in order to intitle him to receive out of it his common Proportion. *Others* brought *all* that they had, and put it into the Apoſtles Hands; and were by Them accordingly taken care of, as thoſe who had nothing left in their private Poſſeſſion: *This Man*, to make a double Advantage to himſelf, kept back *one half*, perhaps *more*, to himſelf; and yet expected to have been taken care of by the Apoſtles, as one that had given all to the Publick, and had left nothing of his own. This is ſo plainly and clearly the intent of the Hiſtory, that it might almoſt ſeem needleſs ſo much as to repeat it; and it can hardly be ſet forth in more full expreſſions, than it is declared in the very words of the Text it ſelf. Yet, I know not whence it comes to paſs, many of the moſt learned Commentators have made a ſhift to miſtake it; and with much Difficulty have found means to make That appear hard and intricate, which in reality was moſt eaſy and obvious. For whereas the Apoſtle charges *Ananias* with the *Deliberateneſs* of the *Fraud*; and aggravates it with the Conſideration of his having been under *no Neceſſity* to make any *Profeſſion* of parting with his Eſtate *at all*, if he was not willing to do it *in reality*; *For whilſt it remained*, ſays he, *was it not thine own? And after it was ſold, was it not in thine own Power? Why haſt thou then conceived this thing in thine Heart?* Whereas This, I ſay, is evidently the Apoſtle's meaning; Many, on the contrary, have contended, that *after it was ſold*, it was by no means any longer *in his own Power*; becauſe ſelling it with an *Intention* to give it to the Apoſtles, they imagine was equivalent to an *Actual ſolemn Vow*; and *That*, could not be broken without plain *Sacrilege*: And therefore thoſe Words, *after it was ſold, was it not in thine own Power?* They interpret to ſignify, *Was it not in thy Power to have brought us the* full *price of it, and ſo to have compleatly accompliſhed thy Vow?* But, beſides that this is a very forced and unnatural Interpretation of theſe *particular* Words; it is moreover very harſh *in the general*, to ſuppoſe a *ſolemn Vow*, whereof there is not the leaſt mention made, either in the Text, or in the whole Hiſtory; and to fix the *main Crime* upon *ſuch* a *Circumſtance*, for which there does not in the Text appear to be ſo much as *any Foundation* at all. On the other ſide, St. *Peter*'s Words, in the obvious and literal ſenſe, ſeem to be very eaſy and natural; that *Ananias* might, if he had pleaſed, have kept to himſelf, either his *Eſtate* or his *Money*; For, who compelled him to ſell it at all? And, after it *was* ſold, if he had a Mind to have kept the Price of it to himſelf, *Who* compelled him to depoſite it in the Apoſtle's hands? But when he *profeſſed* to bring the whole Money into the publick Stock of the Church, and ſo have a Right to be maintained out of that Stock; then at the ſame time to keep back part of it by a Fraudulent Lie, and with intent to deceive the Apoſtles and impoſe upon the whole Body of the Diſciples, This was evidently a very crying Sin, and (without the needleſs Suppoſition of a *Vow*) even no leſs than *Sacrilege*.

And This, concerning the 1*ſt* particular, *viz*. *What* the Crime *in general* was, wherewith *Ananias* is here charged by the Apoſtle.

II. *Secondly*; I propoſed in the 2*d* place, to conſider the ſeveral *Circumſtantial Aggravations* of the Crime, in *His* Caſe *in particular*. And here we may obſerve, firſt, that *deliberate* or *contrived Fraud*, is *in it ſelf* a Crime of the deepeſt Malignity, and of the moſt pernicious conſequences: A Sin which tends to deſtroy all human Society, all Truſt and Confidence among Men, all Juſtice and Equity which is the Support of the World, and without which no Society of Mankind

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can ſubſiſt. And the breaking through this Obligation by deliberate Fraud, is, of all other Sins, one of the moſt open Defiances of Conſcience, and the moſt wilful Oppoſition to right Reaſon, that can be imagined: A Sin, for which a Man can find no Excuſe, nor Extenuation in his own Mind; into the Commiſſion of which, he can be led by no Error, by no wrong Judgment, by no miſtaken Opinion whatſoever; but he muſt of Neceſſity, at leaſt for That Time, have abandoned all true Senſe of Religion; and depend entirely upon the Fact's not being diſcovered, for the concealment of his Shame. Then, for *a Chriſtian*; a man that profeſſes a pure, and more Holy Religion; a Religion that commands not only common Juſtice and Equity, but ſingular Love and Good-will towards our Neighbour; and requires not only abſtinence from the Unjuſt Things of the World, but alſo a Contempt and Indifference even for its innocent Enjoyments; for a Man who profeſſes *ſuch a Religion*, to be guilty of a contrived and deliberate Fraud, which the Conſcience even of a good *Heathen* would abhor; this is a *greater* Aggravation of the Crime. Further yet; to defraud *that* Stock, which was intended principally for the Support and Maintenance of the *Poor*, in a Time of great Trouble and Perſecution; This was an additional Increaſe of his Guilt. And it is no inconſiderable Circumſtance, that This was done at a Time when the whole Church were of *one Heart and of one Mind*, with the utmoſt Simplicity and Sincerity of Manners; when there were no ill Examples to corrupt or ſeduce the Man, but every one contributed with the *utmoſt Chearfulneſs* to the Support of their Brethren; and with all readineſs put all that they had, into the hands of the Apoſtles. Beyond All This; It is obſervable that *Ananias*, excepting the Covetous Diſpoſition of his *own* Mind, had *no Neceſſity*, *no Occaſion*, *no Temptation* put upon him *from without*, to drive him into the projecting of ſuch a Deceit. For this ſelling of their Eſtates, and laying them at the Apoſtles Feet, was not a matter of *Compulſion*, but of *Free Choice*; not a Duty required of them of Neceſſity and by Conſtraint, but an inſtance of voluntary Liberality and of the moſt publick-ſpirited Charity. *Ananias* therefore could not alledge, that there was any Hardſhip, any Conſtraint put upon him in ſelling his Eſtate, which might tempt him to do it in a deceitful manner; but the Whole being *voluntary*, his Tranſaction was from the beginning, originally, and in its whole Progreſs, without any colour of Excuſe, a deliberately-projected, wilful, and continued Fraud. And this I conceive to be the meaning of St. *Peter's Manner* of aggravating his Crime, by that ſevere Reproof and Appeal to his *own* Conſcience in the Words of the Text; *Whilſt it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was ſold, was it not in thine own Power? Why haſt thou* then *conceived this thing in thine Heart?* Laſtly, There is ſtill a farther Aggravation of his Crime, above all that has been yet ſaid; and That is, the *preſumptuouſneſs* of attempting to deceive thoſe perſons, whom he believed and knew to be inſpired with the *Spirit of God:* the Holy Ghoſt having ſo lately deſcended upon them in that extraordinary and miraculous manner at Pentecoſt. To lie to the Apoſtles in This caſe, was lying to the Holy Ghoſt, by whom the Apoſtles were inſpired; and lying to the Holy Ghoſt, was in effect lying to God himſelf, who had *given* unto them his Holy Spirit. *Why hath Satan filled thine Heart to lie to the Holy Ghoſt? —— Thou haſt not lied unto Men, but unto God:* The Word which we render, *lie to the Holy Ghoſt*, ſignifies properly, not only affirming an Untruth, or denying a Promiſe, but, ſomewhat more fully and emphatically, *deceiving, cheating*, or *impoſing upon* a Perſon. By impoſing upon the Apoſtles, *Ananias* attempted, as much as in him lay, to deceive the Holy Ghoſt; and deceiving the Holy Ghoſt, is the very ſame thing, as undertaking to impoſe upon God himſelf, who dwelt in the Apoſtles by his Holy Spirit. The Scripture frequently ſpeaks in this manner: 1 *Cor.* vi. 19; *Your Body*, ſaith St. *Paul, is the Temple of the* Holy Ghoſt *which is in you, which ye have of* God; *i. e.* which God has given you: and 2 *Cor.* vi. 16; *Ye are the Temple of the* Living God. In the *one* place he calls them Temples of the *Holy Ghoſt*; in the *other* he calls them Temples of the *Living God.* The reaſon of theſe *two* different manners of ſpeaking, is expreſſed in *one*, Eph. ii. 21; ye are *an holy Temple in the Lord, — an habitation of* God, *thro' the* Spirit: and 1 *Cor.* iii. 16; *Ye are the Temple of* God; — for *the* Spirit *of God dwelleth in you. Ananias*'s lying therefore to the Holy Ghoſt which dwelt in the Apoſtles,

was

was the very ſame thing, as lying to God himſelf, who dwelt in the Apoſtles by his Holy Spirit. And this was the higheſt *Preſumption*, and the moſt daring Inſolence in the World. SERM. LXXXI.

Why hath Satan *filled thine Heart*? The meaning of the Word, according to the import of the *Hebrew* Idiom, is, Why has Satan made thee ſo *preſumptuous*? For ſo we find the ſame Phraſe to ſignify, *Eſth.* vii. 3; *Where is he that durſt* preſume *in his Heart to do ſo?* It the Margin 'tis literally, according to the Original, where is he *whoſe Heart has* filled *him* to do this Thing? And *Eccleſ.* viii. 11; *Becauſe Sentence againſt an Evil Work is not executed ſpeedily, therefore the Heart of the Sons of Men is* fully ſet *in them to do evil*; In the Original it is, *their Heart has* filled *them*, they are *preſumptuous*, to do evil.

And this likewiſe is the meaning of the *following* Words of St. *Peter* to *Sapphira*, ver. 9; *How is it that ye have agreed together to* Tempt *the Spirit of the Lord?* The Word, *Tempt*, does not ſignify, as it ſounds in the *Engliſh*, to *Try*, or to *make Tryal*, whether God *could* diſcover them or no; but, according to the *Hebrew* Language, and as it is very frequently uſed in the Old Teſtament, it ſignifies *preſumptuouſly and with a high hand to* provoke *God*; as if Men meant to *Try* whether they were *ſtronger* than he, when they diſobey him knowingly and with perfect choice. Thus *Num.* xiv. 22; *Becauſe all thoſe men which have ſeen my Glory, and my Miracles which I did in* Egypt *and in the Wilderneſs, and have* Tempted *me now, i.e.* have *rebelled* againſt me, *theſe Ten times, and have not hearkened to my Voice; Surely they ſhall not ſee the land which I ſware unto their Fathers; neither ſhall any of them that* provoked *me, ſee it.* Here, That which is called *Tempting* of God, in the beginning of the Sentence; is at the latter End explained by the Word, *provoked.* It may juſtly be wondered, how a man that had ſeen the Apoſtles Miracles and the Power of the Holy Ghoſt, and had been juſt converted thereby to the Belief of the Goſpel, could be ſo abſurd as to hope to impoſe upon them by ſo groſs a Fraud. But ſo it always is, that Sinners have Eyes and ſee not, and underſtanding and yet will not underſtand: And, as *Balaam* was ſo fooliſh, that when he found God would by no means permit *Iſrael* to be curſed, yet he would ſtill perſiſt, and go to Another Hill, and try if he could prevail to curſe them from thence; ſo wicked men will never be convinced that *God is not to be mocked*, 'till they periſh finally in their incorrigible Preſumption. The great Aggravation therefore of *Ananias*'s Sin, was This preſumptuous ſetting himſelf againſt the cleareſt Manifeſtation of God's Power and Glory in the Apoſtles. For, what our Saviour declared in general to his Diſciples, that *he that deſpiſes you, deſpiſes me, and he that deſpiſes me, deſpiſes him that ſent me*; was, in a more eminent and particular manner, true of This Perſon; who, by lying to the *Apoſtles* at a Time when he ſaw them evidently inſpired, did in reality preſume to lie to the *Holy Ghoſt* which inſpired them; and, by lying to the Holy Ghoſt, did conſequently lie to *God* himſelf, whoſe Spirit he defied. And as his Crime was thus peculiarly great, ſo alſo accordingly was his Puniſhment. In which nevertheleſs, ſince others afterwards were not ſo puniſhed, 'tis reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that the Ground of that particular Severity was This; that, as at the firſt Setting up of the *Jewiſh* inſtitution, *Uzzah*, for but touching the Ark, was ſtruck dead; and *Achan*, for preſerving ſome of the Spoils of *Jericho*, was ſtoned to Death; and the man who did but gather Sticks upon the Sabbath-day, was by God's expreſs Command to be put to Death; So, at the Beginning of the Goſpel, the firſt Tranſgreſſion was, for *Terror* and *Example*'s ſake, puniſhed with a ſingular and peculiar Temporal Severity.

III. It remains in *the Third* and laſt place, that I proceed to draw ſome uſeful and practical Obſervations, from the ſeveral Expreſſions contained in the Text. And

1*ſt*, From hence we may learn how great a Crime, *Deliberate Fraud* is, which God in this Caſe of *Ananias*, was pleaſed to puniſh with ſo very exemplary and remarkable a Puniſhment.

2*dly*, We may obſerve in the Text, that the Scripture aſcribes *all* great Sins to the Influence of the *Devil*; Why has *Satan* filled thine Heart? The *Devil*, is the Head of Apoſtacy and Rebellion againſt God: And therefore, as all *Good* is aſcribed to *God*, becauſe it is an imitation of his Nature, is performed by his Aſſiſtance, and

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and is agreeable to his Will; ſo all *Evil* is aſcribed to the *Devil;* becauſe 'tis a following of his Example, 'tis performed at his inſtigation, and is agreeable to his Deſires. 1 *Joh.* iii. 8; *He that committeth Sin, is of the Devil; for the Devil ſinneth from the beginning;* —— *whoſoever is born of God, doth not commit Sin;* —— *In this the children of God are manifeſt, and the children of the Devil.* Hence 'tis ſaid, that Satan *provoked* David *to number* Iſrael; *that* Satan *taketh away the Word ſown in* mens *Hearts;* that our *Adverſary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about ſeeking whom he may devour;* and that *we wreſtle againſt Principalities, againſt Powers, againſt the Rulers of the Darkneſs of this World, againſt ſpiritual wickedneſs in high places.* Nay even all *Natural* Evils alſo, for the ſame reaſon are in Scripture ſometimes aſcribed to the *Devil;* becauſe he is the great Promoter, the Head, the Deſigner and the Lover of Evil. Thus, concerning the Woman that *was bowed together,* St. *Luc.* xiii. 11; it is ſaid that *Satan* had *bound her theſe eighteen years;* Likewiſe, that *Satan hindred* St. *Paul* from *coming unto* the *Theſſalonians;* that an affliction ſent him *in the Fleſh,* was *the Meſſenger of Satan to buffet him;* and that *the Devil* ſhould *caſt ſome of* the Saints *into Priſon.*

1 Chron. xxi. 1. Mar. iv. 15. 1 Pet. v. 8. Epheſ. vi. 12. Luc. xiii. 16. 1 Theſſ. ii. 18. Rom. i. 13, 15, 22. 2 Cor. xii 7. Rev. ii. 10.

3*dly*; It is obſervable in the Text, that the Scripture's aſcribing all great Sins to the influence of the Devil, is not by way of *Excuſe*, but always on the contrary an *Aggravation*. *Ananias*, Why *hath Satan filled thine Heart?* 'Twas not an Extenuation, but the *Greatneſs* of his Fault, that he *ſuffered* Satan to fill his Heart. Indeed, where either the Devil or Man find means to *deceive* a Perſon, and lead him really into *Error*; there the *Error*, or the being *deceived*, muſt and ought to be looked upon as ſome Alleviation of the Fault: But where the Crime is *plain*, and there is no room for Error of the *judgment*, as in the Caſe of *deliberate Fraud*; there the being tempted by the *Devil*, is no more an Excuſe, than the being tempted by the *Profit* or the *Gain* of the Sin; Becauſe, in ſuch Caſe, the Temptation of the Devil is in reality nothing more but his laying before a Man the Gainfulneſs of the Sin: And the Perſon's being prevailed upon by That Temptation, is ſo far from being an Excuſe, that it is indeed the very Eſſence and formal Nature of the Crime; his *conſenting to yield* to that Temptation, which could have had no Power over him but by his own Conſent. This is the *very* Thing, which it is the proper Buſineſs of a Chriſtian to overcome. And as it is his Duty always to *grow in Grace*, and to take heed not *to reſiſt* and *grieve the Holy Spirit*; ſo likewiſe on the contrary it is his Duty, to *reſiſt the Devil*; And it is in his *Power* to do ſo, for he ſhall *flee from him*; nor can any man be made to ſin, but *when he is drawn away of his own Luſt, and enticed.* For ſo the Scripture always ſpeaks; declaring even concerning *Judas*, that it was through his own *Covetouſneſs that the Devil entred into him*, and *put it into his Heart to betray* his Maſter; and concerning the *Corinthians*, that *Satan* could not tempt them, but through *their* own *incontinency*; Even in like manner as St. *Peter* in the Text reproves *Ananias*, Why *hath Satan filled thine Heart?*

Eph. iv. 27. Jam. iv. 7. i. 14. 1 Cor. vii. 5.

4*thly*, and *laſtly*; From what has been ſaid in explication of *Theſe Words*; *whilſt it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was ſold, was it not in thine own Power?* it appears that *Ananias* was not, as has been generally ſuppoſed, under any *Vow*; Neither is there in This, or in any Other Paſſage in the whole *New Teſtament*, any Mention of any Chriſtians making *any Vows at all.* In the *Old Teſtament*, among other legal Rites and Cuſtoms, there is indeed frequent mention of *Vows*; and in the Hiſtory of the *Acts* of the Apoſtles, there is an Account of certain *Jews* that lay under *Vows*; and of Converts that lay under Vows made before their converſion. For when they *are* made, the Matter of them not being unlawful, they are of Neceſſity to be kept; *For God hath no pleaſure in Fools; Pay that which thou haſt vowed*; Eccleſ. v. 4, 5. But even under the Law it ſelf in the *Jewiſh* State, there was no Neceſſity of *making* them; For *if thou ſhalt forbear to Vow, it ſhall be no Sin in thee*; Deut. xxiii. 22. And under the Goſpel, there is not only no precept, but even not ſo much as any one Example of any ſuch Thing in the whole *New Teſtament.* Baptiſm indeed and the Lord's Supper, are ſolemn *Vows* of Obedience towards God; But the Matter of them is ſuch, as was, *before*, our indiſpenſable Duty; And ſuch ſolemn renewing our Holy Reſolutions of doing what is of abſolute *Neceſſity* to be done, is undoubtedly of great and perpetual Uſe. But in other Caſes, Vows are at beſt nothing but needleſs Snares upon Men; and generally, (as,

Acts xviii. 18, 22, 23.

in

in the Church of *Rome* their Vows of *Single Life*, of *perpetual Poverty*, and the like) *generally*, I ſay, they are of ſuperſtitious and unwarrantable Practice. The Young man in the Goſpel, who, not content with being told that by keeping the Commandments he ſhould live, would needs recommend himſelf by putting our Saviour upon requiring more of him; departed wholly from Chriſt through his own needleſs importunity; and may well be a warning againſt aiming at Works of Supererogation. What is fit to be done, may be done without laying upon our ſelves unneceſſary Obligations; and ſuch Obligations can be of no Benefit, but needleſly to involve men in Snares and Scruples. Even in the *Old Teſtament* it ſelf, excepting, as I ſaid, ſome particulars in matters of *Legal* performance; it is obſervable that the *Vows* we moſt frequently read of, were not ſuch as the Word now generally ſignifies, but only *ſolemn Reſolutions of* univerſal Obedience. *Jacob*'s Vow, *Gen.* xxviii. 20; *If God will be with me, and keep me in the way that I go,—then ſhall the Lord be my God*; was nothing more but a devout Prayer, that *God* would be pleaſed to preſerve *him*, that *he* might glorify *God* by profeſſing the true Religion in the midſt of idolatrous Nations. The ſame is the meaning of the *peoples* Vow, *Num.* xxi. 2; *Iſrael vowed a vow unto the Lord, and ſaid, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then will I utterly deſtroy their Cities*, i. e. *have no friendſhip with the Idolaters.* And that of *Abſalom*, 2 Sam. xv. 8; *If the Lord ſhall bring me again indeed----, then I will ſerve the Lord.* And to the ſame purpoſe of holy *Reſolutions of* Obedience *only, are thoſe frequent Expreſſions*, Iſ. xix. 21; *In that Day the* Egyptians *ſhall know the Lord*;----*yea, they ſhall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it:* And, *the men feared the Lord*,----*and made Vows*; Jonah i. 16; ii. 9. And *Pſ.* l. 14; *Offer unto God thankſgiving, and pay thy Vows unto the moſt High:* lvi. 12; *Thy Vows are upon me, O God; I will render Praiſes unto thee:* lxi. 5, 8; *Thou, O God, haſt heard my* Vows; *thou haſt given me the heritage of thoſe that fear thy Name; So will I ſing praiſe unto thy Name for ever, that I may daily perform my* Vows: And *Pſ.* cxvi. 13; *I will receive the Cup of Salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord; I will pay my* Vows *unto the Lord, now in the preſence of all his People.* In theſe, I ſay, and many other places, the Word *Vow*, ſignifies nothing more, but *ſolemn Reſolutions of univerſal Obedience.* From the right underſtanding of all which paſſages in the *Old Teſtament*, and the want of any Mention of any Vows at all in the *New*; it is very apparent what is the beſt direction to be given to *Chriſtians* concerning that matter; even never to intangle themſelves in any other obligations at all, but only take care to *keep* thoſe ſacred Vows and Reſolutions, which they ſolemnly enter into at *Baptiſm*, and the *Supper of the Lord.*

SERM. LXXXI.

SERMON LXXXII.

Of the Heinouſneſs of the Sin of wilful Murder.

EXOD. xxi. 14.

But if a man come preſumptuouſly upon his Neighbour, to ſlay him with Guile; thou ſhalt take him from mine Altar, that he may die.

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AS every *Thing* that God has created, is *good*; and nothing becomes *Evil*, but by ſome Corruption or Abuſe: So every natural *Action* is in itſelf *innocent*, and becomes *immoral* merely from the *Circumſtances* that attend it, or from the *intention* that produces it. *Taking away the Life of a Man*, is an Act abſolutely, and in the nature of the thing itſelf, neither good nor evil. In *ſome* caſes and circumſtances it is *juſt*, it is *righteous*, it is *praiſe-worthy*, according to the Laws both of God and Nature. In *other* caſes, it is one of the greateſt of All *Crimes*, and leaſt likely to find Pardon either with *God* or *Men*. The explication of this *One Inſtance* in its full extent, may be uſeful not only with regard to the *Particular* under conſideration; but *in general* alſo it may proportionably

ably be inſtructive, as ſetting forth the nature of Morality and Immorality in moſt other Inſtances whatſoever. The *Law itſelf* is thus expreſſed, *ver.* 12; *He that ſmiteth a man, ſo that he die, ſhall ſurely be put to death.* Yet to ſhow wherein the *Crime*, wherein the *Immorality* conſiſts, there follows in the very next words a Diſtinct Explication, *ver.* 13; *If a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand, then I will appoint thee a place whither he ſhall flee. But if a man come preſumptuouſly upon his Neighbour, to ſlay him with Guile; thou ſhalt take him from mine Altar, that he may die.* The *Eſſence* of All Sin, lies in the *preſuming* to tranſgreſs. Men know in their own conſcience, that ſuch or ſuch an action *ought not* to be done; and yet they *preſumptuouſly* take upon them to do it. This is what juſtly provokes the Anger of God; and according to the degree of the *preſumption*, is the degree of the *Offence*. This is univerſally the caſe, in *All kinds* of *Sin*; and the Reaſon of the *General* Doctrine will moſt clearly appear, by conſidering it in the Caſe of ſo remarkable a *Particular*, as is the Inſtance of *taking away the Life of Man*. Now a man's life may be taken away. SERM. LXXXII.

1*ſt*, By *Chance*; without *any* evil intention *at all*, in Him that does it. And where This is *truly* and *perfectly* the Caſe, there is *No Crime* or Offence committed. For the nature of every action, with regard to Good or Evil, is determined by the Intention; and where there is no Intention, there can be no Morality nor Immorality in the Action. The Meaning of which is, not that the want of evil intention will excuſe an action intrinſically Evil in its own nature; (For in things *intrinſically* and *unalterably wicked* in their own nature, no man's conſcience can be *innocently* deceived;) But the Meaning is, that where there is no intention of doing the Action *at all*, (as in the preſent Caſe,) there the Effect is not indeed (properly ſpeaking) the Action of the Moral and Intelligent Agent. The caſe is put, *Deut.* xix. 5; *As when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a ſtroke with the Ax to cut down the Tree, and the Head ſlippeth from the Helve, and lighteth upon his Neighbour that he die.* Nevertheleſs, even in *This* caſe, where there is *no intention at all* of the *Event that comes to paſs*; there may yet be, in *another* reſpect, *ſome degree* of *Faultineſs* for want of *Care*: For one man ought not to ſuffer, through Another's *Heedleſsneſs* or *Negligence*. And therefore all *reaſonable precaution* to prevent even *accidental* Evils, is a Duty of real moral Obligation. Upon which Account God was pleaſed to appoint under *the Law*, that whoſoever had the misfortune to ſlay a man by Chance, ſhould be obliged to the Trouble of fleeing unto a *City of Refuge*. The obſervation naturally ariſing from which commandment, is that it is a *general* Duty in all caſes, not only to forbear every evil Act, which is *of malicious intention*; but to be careful moreover to avoid, as far as our ſhort Foreſight can extend, whatever may *accidentally* be the Occaſion even of an *undeſigned* Evil. Not that any man is at any time to forbear doing a *plain Duty*, becauſe *other men* may *from thence* take an *Occaſion* of doing *evil:* (For then the Goſpel itſelf ought never to have been preached, becauſe wicked men make it an occaſion of bringing in a *Sword* inſtead of *Peace upon* Earth:) But in all caſes where *Truth* and *Right* are *not* concerned, it is the Duty of a Chriſtian in all his Actions to have regard to the probabilities even of *accidental* ill Conſequences.

2*dly*; The Life of a man may be taken away, in neceſſary and unavoidable *Self-defence*. In which caſe, not he that *takes away*, but he that *loſes* his life, is guilty of the Tranſgreſſion. For in all *moral* eſtimation of things, it is an univerſal Rule; that, *not* always He who perhaps *does* the action, but He always who is the real and *criminal cauſe* of it, is anſwerable for the Evil. *Contentions*, *Animoſities*, and *Diviſions* among Chriſtians, are very great and pernicious immoralities: Yet not always He who *divides*, (as in the caſe of Proteſtants ſeparating from the Church of *Rome*;) but He who *cauſes* the diviſion, and makes it *neceſſary*, and *by whoſe Fault* it is that the *Offence cometh*, *He* only is truly anſwerable for the Crime. And the ſame holds true, even where *Life itſelf* is concerned. *Exod.* xxii. 2; *If a Thief be found breaking up, and be ſmitten that he die, there ſhall no Blood be ſhed for him.* In like manner, where men fall by the Hand of *Juſtice*, for capital Crimes; not the *Magiſtrate*, nor the *Executioner*, but the *Criminal himſelf* is guilty of his own Blood.

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Blood. And, in all juſt and neceſſary *Wars*; not they who *ſlay* the Enemy, but they who by *Tyranny* and *Oppreſſion*, by unſatiable *Avarice*, by *Ambition* and *Pride*, are ſtirred up to ravage and deſtroy the World; upon Theſe comes the Blood of Thouſands and of Ten thouſands, and of all that are ſlain upon the Earth.

From theſe and the like Inſtances it clearly appears, why the word, *preſumptuouſly*, is added in the Text. It is in *This*, as in all *other* Caſes, not the *bare material Action*, but the *Circumſtances of the Intention*, on which depends the Morality or Immorality of what is done. Not always He, who *takes away the Life of a man*, is a *Murderer*; But *if a man comes Preſumptuouſly upon his Neighbour to ſlay him with guile*, *Him* (ſays God in the Text) *ſhalt thou take from mine Altar, that he may die.*

It may well be thought, that, in a *Chriſtian* Congregation, there can be no great need of enlarging upon a Crime, which at firſt ſight ſtartles every man's *natural* conſcience. But as, in all *other* Inſtances of Wickedneſs, there are very many degrees, between being guilty of the higheſt or moſt capital Crime, and preſerving the Habit of that contrary Virtue, to which the Prohibition was intended to be a Guard or Fence; ſo, in the *preſent* Particular, there are many Degrees, between being guilty of the preſumptuous Murder condemned in the Text, and maintaining on the contrary That Habit of Charity, of mutual Love and Good Will, of univerſal Benevolence and Care for each other's Benefit, which the Command, *Thou ſhalt not kill*, was, in its full extent, intended to ſecure. Thus *our Saviour himſelf* explains the matter; *Matt.* v. 21; *Ye have heard that it was ſaid by them of old Time, Thou ſhalt not kill; and whoſoever ſhall kill, ſhall be in danger of the judgment*: (That is, The *Jewiſh* Caſuiſts confined the Command of God to its moſt limited and reſtrained ſenſe:) *But I ſay unto you, Whoſoever is angry with his Brother without a cauſe, ſhall be in danger of the judgment; And whoſoever ſhall ſay to his Brother, Raca, ſhall be in danger of the Council; But whoſoever ſhall ſay, Thou Fool, ſhall be in danger of Hell-fire.* His Meaning is; that, proportionable to the *degree* of the *Offence*, ſhall be the nature and kind of the *Puniſhment*.

Now of *all* crimes that a man is capable of committing, that which is condemned in the *primary* and *literal* ſenſe of the Text, is the moſt enormous; becauſe it is, in the nature of the thing, irreparable; and which no after-act can make any Amends for. For, what recompence can be given a man in exchange for his Life? Or what ſatisfaction can *He* make for deſtroying the *Image of God*, who, far from reſtoring life, is not able to *make one Hair white or black*, or to *add one Cubit unto his Stature*? By the Law of *Nature* therefore, this Crime was always purſued with the moſt extreme vengeance: Which made the *Barbarians* to judge, *Acts* xxviii. 4, when they ſaw St. *Paul* upon the point, as they thought, of dying a ſudden and unnatural Death: *No doubt this man is a* Murderer, *whom, though he has eſcaped the Sea, yet Vengeance ſuffereth not to live.* By the Laws of *all civilized Nations* in all parts of the World, it has always been puniſhed with Death. And by the Law of *God himſelf*, it is of All Offences declared to be the moſt unpardonable. (*Gen.* ix. 5; and *Num.* xxxv. 31;) *At the hand of every man's Brother, will I require the life of Man: Whoſo ſheddeth man's Blood, by man ſhall his Blood be ſhed. Ye ſhall take no ſatisfaction for the life of a Murderer*: ——— *he ſhall ſurely be put to Death.* ----- *So ye ſhall not pollute the Land wherein ye are: For blood defileth the Land; and the Land cannot be cleanſed of the blood that is ſhed therein, but by the Blood of him that ſhed it.* For which reaſon it is recorded in the Hiſtory of *Manaſſeh* with *particular* emphaſis, 2 *Kings* xxiv. 4; xxi. 16; that He *filled Jeruſalem with Blood from one end to the other, which the Lord would not pardon.* And in the words of the Text, *peculiar* directions are given, that whoſoever is guilty of innocent blood, ſhould upon no account be ſuffered to eſcape: *Thou ſhalt take him from mine Altar, that he may die.*

It has been a very ancient imagination in perſons guilty of the moſt *crying Immoralities*, that the Regard men are apt to have for the relative Sacredneſs of Places dedicated to the moſt ſolemn part of God's Worſhip, ſhould be a ſort of *Refuge* to them, and *Protection from Juſtice*. Thus we read, 1 *Kings* ii. 28, that

that *Joab* (who had *fallen upon two men more righteous and better than himſelf, and had ſlain them with the Sword*, ver. 32;) *fled unto the Tabernacle of the Lord, and caught hold on the Horns of the Altar*. But, even under the *Jewiſh* diſpenſation, (where *God himſelf* had appointed the very minuteſt Forms and Ceremonies of their Religion, and had laid great Streſs even upon the niceſt Particularities in the manner of Conſecrating either Perſons or Things or Places, as being *Types* and *Repreſentations* of things ſpiritual and heavenly: Even under the *Jewiſh* diſpenſation *itſelf*, I ſay,) God was pleaſed, where-ever *real Virtue* and *Morality* were concerned, expreſly to declare, as in the *Text*, that no point of external and ceremonious inſtitution, ſhould in any wiſe interfere with matters of Eternal Juſtice, Righteouſneſs, and Truth; and that no pretence of outward appointment in matters of Religion, no Sacredneſs of Place or Thing, no Worſhip or Sacrifice at his Altar, ſhould upon any account be a *Cover* or *Protection* to any Vice or Immorality whatſoever. How much more abſurd therefore is it under the *Chriſtian* diſpenſation, (which, in its whole nature and deſign, is the accompliſhment of all types and figures in the Practice of real and intrinſick Virtue and Holineſs; How much more abſurd is it *Here*,) to ſet up, as the Church of *Rome* has done in innumerable Inſtances, Superſtitious Obſervances preferable to moral Virtue, and, particularly, to value themſelves upon the *Immunities* (as they call them) granted to religious Places; by which, under pretence of being dedicated in a more ſacred manner to the Service of God, they are very often made in a great degree a Protection to Criminals of the Higheſt kind, not excepting even *Murderers* themſelves! But to proceed.

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What Scripture and Nature and Reaſon teach, concerning the Crime of attempting *another man's* life; is applicable in proportion to the Folly of a man's deliberately, and upon Diſcontent with Providence, bereaving himſelf of his *own* life. For as no man knows all the Ends and Deſigns, for which the Divine Providence appointed him his Station, whatſoever it be, in this preſent World; ſo no man has a Right to remove himſelf therefrom; to anticipate the Time of God's calling him to Judgment, or to deprive the Publick of a Member. There is no need to add any thing more upon This Head, than the words of a wiſe Philoſopher among the Heathens. *All pious men*, ſays he, *ought to have patience to remain in the Body, ſo long as God, whoſe Temple and Palace this whole World is, ſhall pleaſe to continue them there; and not force themſelves out of the World, before he calls for them; leſt they be found Deſerters of the Station appointed them of God.*

Cic. Somn. Scipion.

Theſe are Crimes of a very *High* Nature; I wiſh I could alſo add, altogether *unexampled*. But it is further to be obſerved, as I have already intimated; that, in the caſe before us, as in almoſt all *other* Inſtances of Wickedneſs; between being guilty of the preſumptuous Sin condemned in the Text, and maintaining on the contrary That Habit of Charity, of mutual Love and Good Will, of univerſal Benevolence and Care for each other's Benefit, which the Commandment, to which my Text has reference, was, in its full extent, intended to ſecure: between Theſe two things, I ſay, there are very many Degrees, in which the Command given in the *Law*, as explained by our Saviour in the *Goſpel*, (in his Sermon upon the Mount,) may in different manners be tranſgreſſed. As

1*ſt*; In many civilized Nations, and Nations which at the ſame time profeſs Chriſtianity too; from a wrong notion of *Honour*, not regulated by the Limits of true Virtue, there has prevailed a Cuſtom, unknown in ancient times to virtuous nations, even who had not received the Light of the Goſpel; a Cuſtom for men of unſuſpected Courage and Greatneſs of mind, men uſeful to their Country in Poſts of the greateſt Conſequence, and capable of the nobleſt Actions, needleſsly to expoſe their Lives, on a ſudden Tranſport of Paſſion, in vindication frequently of a very ſmall Affront, or ſometimes perhaps even of a Miſtake only. A matter wherein *Human* Laws, and the Execution of Juſtice among *Men*, have oft-times been very apt to incline to the favourable ſide; where the Laws of *God*, and the Reaſon of the *thing itſelf*, ſeem not to

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have left Any room for ſuch Allowances. For if (as I before obſerved) God was pleaſed to appoint under *the Law*, that whoſoever had the misfortune to ſlay a man by Chance, without Any ſort of ill intention at all, ſhould be obliged to the Trouble of fleeing to a *City of Refuge*; that every degree even of *Negligence*, *Heedleſsneſs*, or want of *Care*, whereby our Neighbour might poſſibly receive Damage, might (as far as poſſible) be prevented: How much *more* reaſonable is it, that Tranſports of *Paſſion* and even of the moſt *ſudden* Provocation, ſhould not be allowed in excuſe of an irreparable Damage! a Damage, not only irreparable in *This* World, but of unſpeakable ill conſequence with regard alſo to that which is *to come*; For perſons in theſe Circumſtances generally leave the World, without any real *Forgiveneſs* of *each other*, and without any poſſibillty of effectual *Repentance and Amendment* towards *God*.

2*dly*; The Laws of God, relating to the Life of our Neighbour; taking them according to their real Deſign, and in their true Extent; are tranſgreſſed by all real *Miſchiefs* and *Injuries* whatſoever, done by One man to *Another*, or brought by any man, through the means of any unlawful Action, conſequentially upon *Himſelf*. They are tranſgreſſed by All *Debaucheries*, whereby men deſtroy *Themſelves*; or which they draw *Others* into, to the Ruin of the *Health* of their *Bodies*, and the *Reaſon* of their *Minds*. They are tranſgreſſed by all wilful *Frauds*, and deliberate *Adulterations*, of things made uſe of either in *Food* or *Medicines*; and, in a word, by *every* thing, (*out of the way* of a man's plain Duty,) in conſequence whereof any man receives detriment in his Perſon. Nor is it, in any of theſe caſes, a ſufficient Excuſe, in point of morality, to alledge, that the Evil which follows, was not *intended*. For though no man is anſwerable for any accidental ill Conſequences, which he may poſſibly be the occaſion of in the Performance of his *Duty*; yet whenever any man does any *unlawful* Action, he is undoubtedly *anſwerable*, (in different *degrees* indeed, according to the different Circumſtances; but *anſwerable* certainly he is,) not only for the Evil he *directly intended*, but alſo for the *accidental* ill Conſequences of That Action, which it was his direct Duty *not* to have performed.

3*dly* and *laſtly*; The Precept of the *old Law* referred to in my Text, as explained in the *Goſpel-ſenſe* by our Saviour in his Sermon upon the Mount; is tranſgreſſed by all *Wrath*, *Malice*, *Strife*, *Contentiouſneſs*, and *Hatred* towards our Brethren. 1 *Joh.* iii. 15; *Whoſoever hateth his Brother, is a Murderer; and ye know that no Murderer hath eternal Life abiding in him.* The *Ground* of the Apoſtle's expreſſing himſelf after this manner, is; not only becauſe the Beginnings of wrath and animoſities, in event often extend to great and unforeſeen Effects; as *Cain*'s cauſeleſs Anger againſt his Brother, which the Apoſtle alludes to in the foregoing verſes, ended at length in taking away his Life; But alſo becauſe, in the very nature of the thing, all Hatred and Malice, all Contentiouſneſs and Animoſity, is in itſelf unchriſtian, and is the Spirit of the *Devil*, who was *a Murderer from the Beginning*. For which reaſon our Saviour, in the *place before referred to*, explaining the Antient Law upon this head, enlarges it Thus. *Ye have heard that it was ſaid by them of old time, Thou ſhalt not kill:* —— *But I ſay unto you, Whoſoever is Angry with his Brother without a cauſe, ſhall be in danger of the Judgment; And whoſoever ſhall ſay to his Brother, Raca, ſhall be in danger of the Council; But whoſoever ſhall ſay, Thou Fool, ſhall be in danger of Hell-fire.* The words are an alluſion to three different degrees of Puniſhment, in three ſeveral Courts of Judicature among the *Jews*. And the Senſe of them is, that every degree of *Hatred*, *Malice*, and *Uncharitableneſs* towards our Brethren, ſhall finally receive from God a proportionable Puniſhment, a Puniſhment proportionable to each degree of the Offence; whereas the *Old Law* (according to the *Jews* interpretation of it,) extended not to theſe things at all, but forbad only *Murder* and outward Injuries. *Whoſoever ſhall ſay, Thou, Fool, ſhall be in danger of Hell-fire*: The Meaning is; not that, in the ſtrict and literal ſenſe, every ſuch raſh and paſſionate expreſſion ſhall be puniſhed with eternal damnation: (For who then ſhould be ſaved?) But that at the exact Account in the judgment of the Great Day, every *Word* and Work, nay, every ſecret Thought

Thought and Intent of the Heart, ſhall have its juſt Eſtimation and Weight, in determining the *degrees* of Happineſs or Puniſhment, which ſhall be aſſigned to every man in his final and eternal State. SERM. LXXXII.

Did men frequently and ſeriouſly conſider theſe things as they ought; there would not be found among Chriſtians ſuch Strifes and Contentions, ſuch Hatred and Animoſities, ſuch Violence and Uncharitableneſs, as there is; altogether inconſiſtent with that Meekneſs and *Love*, which the Apoſtle declares to be *the Fulfilling of the Law*; and directly contrary to That Spirit of univerſal Benevolence, Good Will, and mutual Forbearance, which the Scripture every where repreſents as of much greater Value in the Sight of God, than all the Sacrifices offered up to him upon his Altar in the *Jewiſh State*, and than all the external Worſhip paid to him even in the *Chriſtian Church* itſelf.

SERMON

SERMON LXXXIII.

Of the ſeveral Sorts of Hypocriſy.

JOB xiii. 16.

He alſo ſhall be my *Salvation, for an* Hypocrite *ſhall not come before him.*

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THE occaſion of theſe Words, was *Job*'s Friends urging againſt him, that becauſe God had grievouſly afflicted him, therefore he muſt needs have been a very wicked man. To this, *Job* conſtantly replies, by maintaining his own Innocency; and inſiſting, that God the ſupreme Governor of all things, afflicted him for *other* Reaſons according to his own good pleaſure, and not for any wickedneſs or unrighteouſneſs found in *Job*, ch. xxvii. 5; *'Till I die I will not remove my Integrity from me: My righteouſneſs I hold faſt, and will not let it go; my Heart ſhall not reproach me ſo long as I live: For what is the Hope of*

of the Hypocrite, when God taketh away his Soul? The meaning of which Defence of himſelf, was not that he claimed to be entirely *without Sin*; For, on the contrary, when he ſpeaks in *This* Senſe, of being Sinleſs before God, he expreſſes himſelf in a quite different manner; *If I juſtify my ſelf*, ſaith he, *my own mouth ſhall condemn me; if I ſay, I am perfect, it ſhall alſo prove me perverſe*; ch. ix. 20. But with regard to *great Crimes*, ſuch Wickedneſs as his Friends collected, from his ſtate of Adverſity, that he muſt needs have been guilty of; from *theſe* he conſtantly clears himſelf with the greateſt Steddineſs; and proves that they argued very wrongfully for God, when they ſuppoſed that God could no otherwiſe be juſtified in afflicting *Job*, than by *Job*'s having been a very wicked man. *ver.* 7. of this xiiith chapter; *Will you ſpeak wickedly*, ſaith he, *for God; and talk deceitfully for Him? Will ye accept his Perſon? Will ye contend for God? Though he ſlay me*, (ver. 15,) *yet will I truſt in him; but I will maintain my own ways before him:* That is, Though he afflict me to Death, yet will I truſt that he does not expect from me a *falſe confeſſion*, or that I ſhould endeavour to *juſtify his Proceedings* by any wrong *Suppoſition*. And then he adds in the words of the Text; *He alſo ſhall be* my *Salvation, for an Hypocrite ſhall not come before him:* That is, I know that after all this, he will at length deliver me; and will in the End diſtinguiſh his faithful Servant, from the Deſtruction of a *Hypocrite*.

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The word *Hypocrite*, is here plainly uſed in oppoſition to ſuch a ſincere perſon as can *maintain his own ways before God*; ſo *Job* expreſſes it: Or, in St. *John*'s phraſe, to ſuch a good man, who, becauſe *his own Heart condemneth him not, has* therefore *Confidence towards God*. In which matter, becauſe there is oftentimes very great Deceit; and frequently very ill men think themſelves *not to be Hypocrites*, becauſe they are not ſo in the groſſeſt and moſt literal Senſe of the word; I ſhall therefore in the following Diſcourſe endeavour to ſet this matter in a clear Light, and point forth diſtinctly the ſeveral Sorts of men which are in Scripture charged with the Denomination of *Hypocrites*. The Uſe of which Diſcourſe will be, that we may learn, *not* to judge our *Neighbours*, whoſe Hearts we cannot diſcern; any further than they open themſelves by manifeſt Actions: But that every man may ſeriouſly examine his *own* Heart by the Rule of Scripture, and find whether there be not often in it *more* of what the Scripture ſtyles *Hypocriſy*, than careleſs perſons are apt to be aware of.

I. *Firſt* then; The *greateſt* and *higheſt* degree of *Hypocriſy*, is when men, with a formed Deſign and deliberate Intention, endeavour under a Pretence of Religion and an Appearance of ſerving God, to carry on worldly and corrupt Ends. Of *This* Sort, were thoſe whom our Saviour deſcribes, *Matt.* xxiii. 14; *Wo unto you, Scribes and Phariſees, Hypocrites; For ye devour widows houſes, and for a pretence make long Prayers; therefore ye ſhall receive the greater damnation.* And *ver.* 27; *Wo unto you, Scribes and Phariſees, Hypocrites; for ye are like unto whited Sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but within are full of dead mens bones, and of all uncleanneſs; Even ſo* Ye *alſo outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocriſy and iniquity*. The Words next *following* to which, have in the *manner of expreſſion*, a difficulty which deſerves particular explication: *Ver.* 29; *Wo unto you*, ſays our Saviour, becauſe *ye build the Tombs of the Prophets, and garniſh the Sepulchres of the righteous; And ſay, if we had been in the days of our Fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the Blood of the Prophets: Wherefore ye are witneſſes unto your ſelves that ye are the children of them which killed the Prophets.* The ſame words, as recorded by St. *Luke*, are ſtill more remarkable, *ch.* xi. 47; *Wo unto you*; for *ye build the Sepulchres of the Prophets, and your Fathers killed them; Truly ye bear witneſs that ye allow the deeds of your Fathers*; for *They indeed killed them, and Ye build their Sepulchres*. The Queſtion *here* is, *how* our Saviour pronounces a Woe againſt theſe Phariſees, *for* building the Sepulchres of the Prophets; and *how* he infers, that they *allowed* the deeds of their Fathers, by that *very* action whereby they profeſſed to *diſclaim and diſallow* them. Now in order to explain This difficulty, it is needful only to obſerve, that in *ſome* languages, and in That of the *Jews* particularly, it is both uſual and elegant to ſuppreſs *part* of the propoſition, which yet by neceſſary inference is always plainly underſtood. Thus *Rom.* vi. 17; *God be thanked*, ſaith St. *Paul*, that *ye* were *the Servants of Sin*;

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but ye have obeyed the doctrine that was delivered you. His meaning plainly is; *God be thanked*, that, *notwithſtanding* your ſtrong *Prejudices* againſt the Goſpel, by having been formerly *habitual Sinners*, yet *at length* ye were convinced and embraced the Truth. In like manner *here*, the Phariſees well underſtood the force of our Saviour's reproof, and that his intention was This, to declare that *notwithſtanding* their profeſſing to diſclaim the Deeds of their Fathers who killed the Prophets, yet in reality they were as truly in the *moral ſenſe* the children of theſe men by *Likeneſs and Imitation of Manners*, as they acknowledged themſelves to be deſcended from them by *natural Birth*; and that, *notwithſtanding* their pretending to ſhow great Reſpect for the Memory of the Ancient Prophets, by building and adorning their Tombs; yet in reality this Reſpect was only ſhown to thoſe Prophets becauſe they were *Dead*, and could no longer reprove and ſhame them for their Vices; whereas the *Living Prophets* were *perſecuted* by *them*, juſt as the *Antient Ones* had been by their *Fore-fathers*. Theſe men therefore were guilty of the *firſt* and *higheſt* degree of *hypocriſy*, carrying on wicked deſigns deliberately under the pretence of Religion.

Of the ſame kind were Thoſe in the xvi*th* of St. *Matthew*, *ver.* 1; who after our Saviour had in their preſence worked many Miracles upon *Earth*, perverſely and impertinently (as if the *Place* were of more moment than the *Greatneſs* of the Work) urged him to *ſhow* them *likewiſe* ſome Miracle *in the Heavens*. To whom he replies, *ver.* 3, with ſuitable Sharpneſs; *O ye* hypocrites, *ye can diſcern the Face of the Sky, but can ye not diſcern the Signs of the Times?*

Under the ſame denomination alſo, came Thoſe mentioned in the xxii*d ch.* of the ſame Goſpel, at the 17*th verſe*; who asked our Saviour, *Is it lawful to give tribute unto* Cæſar, *or not*? meaning to accuſe him as a *Betrayer of the Liberty of the* Jews, if he ſhould ſay it *was* lawful; or, on the contrary, as a *mover of Sedition againſt the* Romans, if he ſhould ſay it *was not* lawful. To whom therefore he accordingly replies with a deſerved Sharpneſs, *ver.* 18, *Why tempt ye me, ye* hypocrites?

Laſtly; Under the ſame rank and character, (of hypocrites of the *worſt* ſort, *ſuch* as have *no manner* of Regard either to *God* or to *True Virtue* in all their Pretences to Religion;) under *This* rank, I ſay, may juſtly be placed Thoſe Phariſees, againſt whoſe Practices our Saviour warns his Diſciples, St. *Matt.* vi; 2, 5, 16; *When thou doſt thine alms, do not ſound a Trumpet before thee, as the* hypocrites *do, in the Synagogues and in the Streets, that they may have Glory of Men. And when thou prayeſt, thou ſhalt not be as the* Hypocrites *are; for they love to pray ſtanding in the Synagogues, and in the Corners of the Streets, that they may be ſeen of Men. And when ye faſt, be not as the* hypocrites, *of a ſad countenance; for they diſfigure their faces, that they may appear unto Men to faſt.* This Corruption was, *in our Saviour's time*, grown in a manner ſo *univerſal*, among the moſt Eminent Men of the *Jews*; that, as if it had been the known and proper *characteriſtick* of ſome of their principal Sects, he ſometimes, without mentioning the *particular*, thought it ſufficient to admoniſh and caution his Diſciples in thoſe *general* words, St. *Matt.* xvi. 6; *Take heed and beware of the* Leaven *of the Phariſees and of the Sadducees*; Of the *Leaven*, that is, (as the Evangeliſt explains it, *ver.* 12;) of the Doctrine *of the Phariſees and of the Sadducees*; and St. *Luke* ſtill *more* expreſly, *ch.* xii. 1; *The* Leaven *of the Phariſees, which is* Hypocriſy.

After our Saviour's time, the *Apoſtles* deſcribe to us the *ſame* kind of *hypocriſy*, in the characters of the *worſt* men who were in following Ages to ariſe in the Church. The *Times ſhall come*, ſaith St. *Paul*, 2 *Tim.* iii. 2, when *men ſhall be lovers of their own ſelves, ---- more than lovers of God; Having a* Form *of Godlineſs, but denying the Power thereof; ---- creeping into houſes, and leading captive ſilly women, laden with Sins, led away with divers Luſts.* His meaning is, to deſcribe *ſuch* perſons, as under pretence of *Sanctity* and a *Form* of Godlineſs, or with great zeal for certain *Rites* and *Ceremonies* and *Appearances* of Religion, either cheat and defraud men in their *dealings* without Truth and Juſtice, or corrupt mens manners, and ſeduce men and women into the Practice of *Immoralities*, as if *not inconſiſtent* with Religion. Our Saviour has given us a never-failing Rule, to diſcover this hypocriſy: *By their* Fruits, ſays he, *ye ſhall know them*; Matt. vii. 16. Not by their *Zeal*,

not

not by their *Fierceneſs*, for This or the other particular *Opinion*, for This or the other particular *Form* of Godlineſs; but by their *Fruits*, ſays he, by the general and habitual Tenor and Courſe of their Lives, *by This* ye ſhall know them. For, as a good Tree can no otherwiſe be diſtinguiſhed from a bad one, but by the Fruit it bears; ſo in matters of Religion, *whatever*, under *any pretence* whatſoever, has *any other* Tendency, than to promote Truth and Juſtice, Plainneſs and Simplicity, Sobriety and Righteouſneſs, Meekneſs and Equity, Charity and univerſal Good-will amongſt Men; whatever (I ſay) has *any other* Tendency than This, is, by our Saviour's Rule, moſt *certain Hypocriſy*: 'Tis *Profeſſing to know God, but in Works denying him*, Tit. i. 16: From whence we may eaſily judge, under what Head are to be placed the *gainful* Doctrines of *Purgatory*, of *Maſſes for the Dead*, of *private Confeſſions and Abſolutions by the Power of the Prieſt*, of *Prohibitions of Meats by the Authority of the Church*, in order to grant *Indulgences for the Churches Profit*; and the like. Concerning which kind of things, St. *Paul* ſpeaks prophetically, 1 *Tim.* iv. 2; *ſeducing Spirits*, ſaith he, *ſpeaking lies in* hypocriſy; *having their conſcience ſeared with a hot iron*; *Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abſtain from meats*; and ſo on: And *Tit.* i. 11, *Teaching things which they ought not, for filthy* Lucre's *ſake*. Which ſort of Doctrines, becauſe they are naturally accompanied with a *factious* and *contentious* Spirit, without which they can never be ſupported; and becauſe they are of ſuch a Nature, as can never proceed from mere Error of the *Underſtanding*, but always ariſe from ſome Perverſeneſs of the *Will*, inconſiſtent with the ſincerity and good conſcience of a Chriſtian; therefore they are by the Apoſtles ſtiled *Factions* or *Hereſies*; that is, corrupt Notions propagated by wicked men for worldly and factious Purpoſes, *againſt* the conviction of their own Conſciences: *Tit.* iii. 10; *A man that is an Heretick, reject*; *knowing that he that is ſuch, is ſubverted, and ſinneth, being condemned of* himſelf: And 2 *Pet.* ii. 1; They ſhall *bring in damnable Hereſies, even denying the Lord that bought them*: That is, departing from *God*, (who redeemed or *bought* them to himſelf with a price, even with the precious Blood of Chriſt,) they ſhall *through Covetouſneſs*, ſaith he, (that is, through the Love of this world, through Ambition, or the Deſire of Temporal Power and Profit,) *with feigned words make* merchandize *of you*; *ver.* 3.

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This, is the *firſt* and *higheſt* degree of *hypocriſy*; when men thus, with a formed Deſign and deliberate Intention, endeavour under a Pretence of Religion, and an Appearance of ſerving God, to carry on worldly and corrupt Ends. And becauſe the word *hypocriſy* is Now generally uſed in This *worſt* Senſe; therefore, if men know themſelves to be free from this greateſt and moſt hateful degree of it, they are too apt immediately to flatter themſelves, that they are conſequently in no ſenſe chargeable with being Hypocrites at all. But the Scripture frequently uſes the ſame word in ſeveral *lower* ſenſes, which deſerve carefully to be taken notice of; when it deſcribes men, not indeed *profligate* as the foregoing, but yet, in their ſeveral degrees, juſtly charged with being guilty of *Hypocriſy*.

II. *Secondly* Therefore; thoſe who mean not abſolutely to caſt off all Religion, nor dare in their own hearts totally to deſpiſe it; but yet willingly content themſelves with the *formal* part of it, and, by zealouſly obſerving certain outward Rites and Ceremonies, think to attone for great Defects of Sobriety, Righteouſneſs and Truth; *Theſe* alſo the Scripture always includes, under the character and denomination of *Hypocrites*. *Theſe*, the preſence of the Ark of God, preſerved not, in the days of *Saul*, from falling into the hands of the *Philiſtines*. *Theſe*, the Temple of God, and the Sacredneſs of the Place wherein he had choſen, above all the Nations upon Earth, to place his Name there; delivered not from the deſolations brought upon *Jeruſalem*, by the *Chaldeans* and the *Romans*. *Theſe*, all the Promiſes made by Chriſt in the New Teſtament to his Church, reſcued not, in the days of the Chriſtian Emperors, from the over-flowing deluge of barbarous Nations, of *Goths* and *Vandals*, from *abroad*; nor from the growing corruption of idolatrous Ceremonies, and Saint-worſhip, from *within*. *Theſe*, each in their ſeveral Ages, were zealous for the *Name* of their Religion, but not for the *righteouſneſs* thereof; and therefore God removed their Candleſtick out of its place. This, is That Species of Hypocriſy, for which *Samuel* reproved *Saul*, 1 Sam.

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xv. 22; *Hath the Lord as great delight in Burnt-offerings and Sacrifices, as in obeying the Voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than ſacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of Rams:* And for which the Prophet *Hoſea* thus reproves the people of the *Jews* in *His* Time, *ch.* vi. 6; *I deſired Mercy and not Sacrifice; and the Knowledge of God, more than Burnt-Offerings.* This alſo was, in our Saviour's days, the caſe of the *better* ſort of Phariſees, of Thoſe who ſeem, *not to have been* wholly profligate and void of all Religion in their Hearts, but *ſuperſtitious* with regard to *ſmall* things, to the Neglect of *Greater.* Such, as he ſtiles *hypocrites*; for *teaching, as Doctrines, the Commandments of Men*; *St.* Matt. xv. 9: For contributing ſuperſtitiouſly, to the adorning and beautifying of the Temple, that particular Portion of their Goods, which they ought to have employed in maintaining their poor and indigent Parents; *ver.* 5: For being zealous in the obſervation of the *traditionary* Ceremonies of their Fore-Fathers, in the frequent *waſhing of hands*, and *cleaning of Cups*, and other outward *Purifications*; to the neglect of true Virtue, and *inward* moral Righteouſneſs; *Matt.* xxiii. 25: For being preciſe in *tithing mint, aniſe and cummin*; *and omitting the weightier matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy and Faith*; *Faith*, that is, Faithfulneſs or Fidelity in all their Dealings with men, *ver.* 23: Laſtly, for being *more ſollicitous*, in keeping the *poſitive* Law of their *Sabbath*, (which ought not indeed to be left undone; But he accuſes them for being *more* ſollicitous in attending to This,) than in works of *mercy, goodneſs, and charity*, which are of eternal and unalterable Obligation; St. *Luke* xiii. 15; *Thou* hypocrite, ſays our Saviour to the Ruler of the Synagogue, *Ought not this woman, being a daughter of* Abraham, *to be looſed from this Bond*, (from this *Diſeaſe*) *on the* Sabbath-day?

Of the *ſame* Species of hypocriſy, are *They* guilty in *All* Ages, who make the Advancement of Religion, and the Increaſe of the Kingdom of Chriſt, to conſiſt chiefly in the *external, temporal*, or *worldly* Proſperity of thoſe who are called by his Name; in Pomp and Splendor, in Riches and Dignities, in Authority, Power and Dominion. *Not* perhaps that they go upon the Principles of *Atheiſm and Infidelity*, (which is the caſe of the *firſt* and *higheſt* degree of Hypocrites, mentioned under the fore-going Head;) but, by a *ſecret* Deceitfulneſs of Sin, and a Love of this preſent World, their Judgment is *perverted* to be more concerned for the Authority of *Men*, than for the Commands of *God*; and they judge of the State of Religion, by the meaſure of ſuch worldly Advantages, as perhaps have *no* relation to true Piety: Whereas indeed the True Proſperity of the Church of God, or the Increaſe of the Kingdom of Chriſt on *Earth*, can conſiſt in nothing elſe, but in the things which will increaſe the Number of his Subjects in *Heaven*; And *That* can only be done, by the *Prevalency* of *Truth*, by *Simplicity* of *Doctrine*, and by *Righteouſneſs* of *Practice.* For, *Not* they that *ſay unto him, Lord, Lord*; that is, not they who make outward profeſſion of Chriſt's Religion; *ſhall enter the Kingdom of Heaven*; *but they that* do *the Will of his Father which is in Heaven.* Without which real Righteouſneſs; *as the Body without the Spirit is dead, ſo Faith without Works is Dead alſo.* For, *He is not a Jew*, ſaith St. *Paul*, Rom. ii. 28; (neither is He a *Chriſtian*;) *which is one outwardly*; *neither is That circumciſion, which is outward in the Fleſh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly*; *And circumciſion is That of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in the Letter*; *whoſe Praiſe is not of Men but of God.*

III. *Thirdly*; A *lower* Degree of Hypocriſy, (but *ſtill* included under That Name, according to the Scripture-notion of the word,) is the Behaviour of Thoſe, who *have* indeed *very right Notions* of Religion, truly judging it to conſiſt principally in righteouſneſs and holineſs of Life, and accordingly being duly ſenſible of the neceſſity of Virtue and of moral Obedience; but yet content themſelves with vain reſolutions of *future* Repentance, and for the *preſent* live ſecurely in the Practice of Sin. Againſt *This* Hypocriſy, this *ſecret* hypocriſy, this *Deceitfulneſs* of Sin, with which men impoſe upon *themſelves* rather than upon *others*; our Saviour affectionately warns us, *Matt.* xxiv. 42; *Watch therefore*, ſays he, *for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come:* ——

But

But *be ye* Always *Ready*; *for in ſuch hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh*:---- *Bleſſed is That Servant, whom his Lord when he cometh ſhall find ſo doing*: —— *But if that Evil Servant ſhall ſay in his Heart, my Lord delayeth his Coming*; *and ſhall begin to ſmite his fellow-ſervants, and to eat and drink with the Drunken*; *The Lord of that Servant ſhall come in a day that he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of*; *and ſhall cut him aſunder, and appoint him his portion with the* hypocrites. SERM. LXXXIII.

IV. *Fourthly*; The *laſt* and *loweſt* degree of hypocriſy, (deſcribed under That character in Scripture,) is of *Thoſe*, who *not only* have right *Notions* of Religion, and a due Senſe of the indiſpenſable Neceſſity of Repentance and Reformation *hereafter*; but even *at preſent*, have ſome imperfect Reſolutions of *immediate* Obedience; and even *actual*, but yet *ineffectual*, Endeavours after it. Theſe, are the Perſons deſcribed, *Rom.* vii. 19; *The Good that they would, they do not*; *but the Evil which they would not, That they do.* They are the *ſtony ground*, on which the Seed was ſown in our Saviour's Parable, *Matt.* xiii. 5; who *with joy receive the word*, ver. 20; But for want of *deepneſs of earth*, and *not having root in it ſelf*, it *dureth* only *for a while*; and either upon the Approach of Perſecution, or upon the Aſſault of Temptation from ſome beloved Sin, they very quickly *fall away*. Their *Heart*, as the Scripture expreſſes it, is not *Whole*, or *Right with the Lord*; but they *ſerve Two Maſters*, and their Affections are divided between *God and Mammon*. To theſe, St. *James* declares, that *He who offendeth in One point, is guilty of all*; meaning, not that all Sinners are *equally Sinners*, but that whoever allows himſelf in any *one* known Sin, is thereby juſtly denominated, and will be puniſhed as being a *Tranſgreſſor of the Law*. And our Saviour admoniſhes them, *Luke* xiii. 24; that *Many ſhall ſeek to enter in at the ſtrait gate, and not be able*; meaning, that ſo long as they continue in the Practice of any *one* Vice unreformed, and are not able to prevail with themſelves to forſake a darling Sin, their Endeavours to obtain the Kingdom of God cannot but be ineffectual. 'Tis *no better*, than a ſecret *hypocriſy*; to account themſelves *righteous* for not being guilty of *other* Faults, while their falſe Heart indulges it ſelf in any *one* habitual known Sin, and ſpeaks Peace to it ſelf by attending only to *one part* of its own character. If they never forſake this One beloved Luſt, the words of *Zophar* in the Book of *Job* are but too applicable to them, *ch.* xx. 5; (and viii. 13;) *The Joy of the hypocrite, is but for a Moment*, and *his Truſt ſhall be a Spider's Web*.

Nevertheleſs, ſuch Perſons as Theſe, muſt by no means be compared with thoſe *much worſe* Sinners, mentioned under the fore-going Heads. For, though Theſe *are* indeed at preſent in an *Evil* State, yet there is in them a Root of ſome Love to Virtue, which affords great Hope that it may in time ſpring up unto righteouſneſs, and unto Life eternal. They are the *bruiſed Reed*, which ought not to be *broken*; and the *ſmoaking Flax*, which ought not to be *quenched*. They are what the Apoſtle calls, *Heb.* xii. 13, *the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees*; *the Lame*, which ought not to be *turned out of the way, but* that *it rather be healed*. They ought not to be terrified, and driven into deſpair; but, with all meekneſs and compaſſion, to be continually exhorted, that they finiſh their Repentance, and make haſte to mortify every inordinate Luſt, before *the Night cometh when no man can work*.

Thus have I briefly deſcribed to you, the ſeveral *ſorts* and *degrees* of *hypocriſy*. The two *firſt* kinds; namely, the endeavouring deliberately, under a Pretence of Religion, to carry on *worldly and corrupt Ends*; and the preſuming, by the obſervation of certain *Forms and Ceremonies* of *Any* kind, to make amends for the want of Truth and Righteouſneſs, of Virtue and Goodneſs; theſe Two, are what the Scripture calls an *Abomination to the Lord*, or the higheſt poſſible Provocation of his Diſpleaſure. The two *latter* ſorts; namely, the intending in ſome particular Inſtances to amend our lives *hereafter*, or the endeavouring it *at preſent* but faintly and ineffectually, through the Deceitfulneſs of Sin; theſe are the hypocriſy, (or the Falſeneſs *indeed* more to *Themſelves* than *Others*,) which belongs to the character of *ſuch* perſons, whom God uſually *corrects* with his *judgments*, and *gives them* ſpace *of Repentance*, and *invites* them by his *Mercies*, and *bears long* with them thro' his *Patience*; 'till either at length they deliver themſelves by a *thorough*

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Amendment out of the Snare of the Devil, or become finally *hardened* and given up as *incorrigible*.

The *Uſe* of what has been ſaid, is (as I obſerved at the Beginning,) that from hence every Man may learn, not to judge his *Neighbour*, who to his own Maſter ſtandeth or falleth; but to examine ſeriouſly the ſtate of his *Own* Heart. Which, whoſoever does, carefully and impartially, and with the true Spirit of a Chriſtian; will find little reaſon to be cenſorious upon *Others*. *Matt.* vii. 5; *Thou hypocrite*, ſays our Saviour, *firſt caſt out the beam out of thine own eye, and then ſhalt thou ſee clearly to caſt out the Mote out of thy Brother's eye.*

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Who are the true Church of GOD.

GAL. iv. 22, 23, 24.

For it is written, that Abraham had Two Sons, the one by a bond-maid, the other by a free-woman. But he who was of the bond-woman, was born after the Fleſh; but he of the free-woman, was by Promiſe. Which things are an Allegory: *For theſe are the two Covenants.*

IN diſcourſing upon theſe words of the Apoſtle, I ſhall *firſt* conſider *What* the *Doctrine* is, which he here aſſerts and illuſtrates. *Secondly*, I ſhall ſhow, that it is a Doctrine founded in the univerſal Reaſon and Nature of Things, and inculcated in every part of Scripture. And, *Thirdly*, I ſhall endeavour to explain, *wherein* lies the Streſs and Force of That particular Argument, which the Apoſtle here draws from That Hiſtorical Similitude, which he ſtiles an *Allegory*.

I. *Firſt*; In order to underſtand clearly and diſtinctly, *What* the *Doctrine itſelf* is, which the Apoſtle is here aſſerting and illuſtrating; It is to be obſerved, that as *Good* and *Evil* are *themſelves* eſſentially and neceſſarily diſtinguiſhed, by the unalterable Nature and Reaſon of *Things*; and *Good* and *Evil* Men are, in the Moral ſenſe, likewiſe eſſentially and neceſſarily diſtinguiſhed from each other, by their *Doing* what is *Good* or *Evil*: So *God*, who can never poſſibly be deceived in judging, either of the *Nature of Things*, or of the *Characters of Perſons*, muſt conſequently, in his *Government* of the *rational and moral* World, be continually determined by the conſideration of theſe neceſſary and eſſential Diſtinctions. For,

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What things *really Are* in themſelves; *That*, to an unerring Underſtanding, they muſt always neceſſarily *Appear* to be: And *Whatſoever* is, in *its own* nature, *Praiſe-worthy* or *Blameable*; cannot but, by an All-powerful and Impartial Governor, be diſtinguiſhed accordingly. *Virtuous* and *Vicious* Men therefore, cannot but be in the *Favour* or under the *Diſpleaſure* of God; in proportion to the degree of their reſpective Qualifications. Conſequently, the *Sum Total*, the *Congregation* or *General Aſſembly*, of all *virtuous and good* men from the Beginning of the World, are the *True univerſal Church* or *City of God*, the *heavenly Jeruſalem*: And all *Impenitent Sinners* of all kinds, are *Reprobates*, or the *Sons of Perdition*. But becauſe in This preſent World, where the *Hearts* of men are not diſcernable to each other, it is impoſſible men can be *ſorted* according to theſe real diſtinctions; therefore of neceſſity *Here*, the *true Church of God* muſt be *repreſented by*, and in the *Sight of Men* be eſteemed *to* Be, All Thoſe who *make Profeſſion* of being, and *in Appearance* are, what they *really* ought to be: And even of *God himſelf*, ſo far as concerns all *Publick Temporal Diſpenſations*, they muſt be looked upon as his *Church* and his *People*. The *Families*, the *Cities*, the *Nations* worſhipping the True God; are Thoſe to whom all *General Declarations*, *Promiſes*, and *Threatnings*, relating to God's Church on Earth, muſt of neceſſity be addreſſed. Men of corrupt minds, inſenſible of the eſſential and indiſpenſable neceſſity of true Virtue, in order to be pleaſing to God; have from hence always been apt to deceive themſelves, as if being Members of the True Church of God, and Profeſſors of the True Religion, would be of real Advantage to them, without That inward Holineſs and true Goodneſs of the Heart and Mind, which as certainly ſhows forth itſelf in the habitual Practice of a virtuous Life, as a Good Tree from a Sound Root will not fail to bring forth Good Fruit. The *Jews*, in the time of our Saviour and his Apoſtles, were almoſt univerſally fallen into this Great Error, in the higheſt Degree and in the moſt remarkable manner. The *Family* of *Abraham*, had diſtinguiſhed itſelf in an extraordinary manner from all *other Families*; and the *Nation* of the *Jews*, from all *other Nations*; by being Publick Worſhippers of the *One True God*, the God of the Univerſe; while all *other people* were overſpread with the abſurdeſt and moſt barbarous Idolatries. And God accordingly had been pleaſed to diſtinguiſh *That Family* and *Nation*, with repeated *Promiſes* of the Greateſt and moſt Laſting *Bleſſings*; with *Promiſes*, that *He* would be *Their God*, and *They* ſhould be *His people*; and that among *Them* ſhould finally be eſtabliſhed a *Kingdom*, which ſhould have *no End*. It is evident at firſt Sight, that God cannot be the *God* of the *Dead*, but of the *Living*; and that therefore all theſe Promiſes to *Abraham* and his *Poſterity*, and to the True Worſhippers of God in *All Ages*, could be no better than mere Mockery, if God were not able to raiſe them from the Dead, that they might perſonally be Inheritors of the Promiſed Kingdom, when the Time of its Eſtabliſhment ſhould be fulfilled. Upon This ground therefore, the *Jews* had univerſally an expectation of a *future Life*: And, as being the Poſterity of thoſe Worſhippers of the True God, to whom all the Promiſes were made; they appropriated to *Themſelves* all expectation of the *Eternal*, as well as of the *Temporal*, Favour of God. And ſo far as they were *truly*, what they *profeſſed* to be, *ſincere Practiſers* of This True Religion; *ſo far indeed* they had *reaſon* to appropriate to themſelves the *promiſed Bleſſings* of God's *peculiar people*. But, by degrees, ſeparating the *Letter* of God's Promiſes from the declared *Intent and Reaſon* of them, they fell into an imagination, that the Promiſes made to God's Church and People, were appropriated to Thoſe who were the Poſterity of *Abraham literally* and by *natural Deſcent*, and not to Thoſe who were his Poſterity in the *ſpiritual* and *religious* Senſe, that is, who inherited his Faithfulneſs in adhering to That True Religion, upon *account of which* the Promiſes were made to him. This error of the *Jews* it was, that St. *Paul* in this Epiſtle ſets himſelf to oppoſe. And the *Doctrine* he *aſſerts* in oppoſition to it, is; that though the Promiſes of God were indeed made to the *Poſterity of Abraham*, as his *Church and People*; yet it was always underſtood that this Poſterity of *Abraham* in the *literal ſenſe* according to the *Fleſh*, was but the *viſible* or *Earthly* Church, the *type* or *repreſentative* of the *real inviſible* Church of God, the *true* Children of *Abraham* in the *ſpiritual* and *religious* Senſe, the *Succeſſors* and *Followers* of the Patriarch in his *True Religion*, in his *Faithfulneſs* and *Obedience* towards God.

Know;

Know, ſaith he, ch. iii. 7, *that they which are of* Faith, *the ſame are the children of* SERM. *Abraham*; and, *are bleſſed with* Faithful *Abraham*. For, God's Covenant having LXXXIV. been made with *Abraham before* his *Circumciſion*, which was but the *external Sign* or *Token* of the Covenant; it is evident the *Foundation* of the Covenant, was *That* ver. 9. *Faith* and *Obedience*; in which whoſoever followed the *example* of *Abraham*, and Rom. iv. 12. *walked in his ſteps*, though he were not of That *lineal Deſcent* which was commanded to be diſtinguiſhed by the *External Sign*, yet in the *religious* ſenſe, he was, in God's eſtimation, a *child of Abraham*. Ver. 28; *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither Bond nor Free*; -- *for ye are all One in Chriſt Jeſus: And if ye be Chriſt's, then are ye* Abraham's Seed, *and Heirs according to the Promiſe*. If ye be *Chriſt's*; that is, if ye be obedient to *the everlaſting Goſpel*, to That *Goſpel which was preached before unto Abraham*, ver. 8; *then are ye Abraham's Seed, and Heirs according to the Promiſe*. For, *in Chriſt Jeſus*, ſaith he, *neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor* Gal. vi. 15. *uncircumciſion, but a New creature*, (that is, *Faith which worketh by Love*:) *And as* ch. v. 6. *many as walk according to This Rule, Peace be on them, and Mercy, and upon the Iſrael of God*. This is the *Doctrine*, which the Apoſtle at large *aſſerts* in this Epiſtle. And he *illuſtrates* it *particularly* in the words of my *Text*, by a *Similitude* drawn from what happened in the Family of *Abraham* himſelf. As *Abraham*, ſays he, had *two Sons*; the *one* by a *Bond-maid*, the *other* by a *Free-woman*: And as the *Son of the Bond-maid*, though *according to the Fleſh*, as truly his *Natural Deſcendant* as the Other, yet was not to be *Co-heir* with *Him* who, by the *Promiſe* of God, was appointed to *inherit*: So, ſays he, the *Jeruſalem which Now is*, and is, *in Bondage with her children*; the *viſible earthly Church*, which received the external ceremonial Law from *Mount Sina*; is not, by That *outward general* denomination, intitled to the eternal Favour of God; But the *Jeruſalem which is above*, which is the *Mother of us all*, or *All* who by True Faith and ſincere Obedience are pleaſing to God; This *heavenly Jeruſalem*, this *ſpiritual inviſible* Church or *City of the Living God*, this *general aſſembly and Church of the Firſt-born which are written in Heaven*; *This* it is, to which all the Promiſes of God, made to his *Church*, are, in reality, originally and finally appropriated. This is the *Doctrine aſſerted* and *illuſtrated* in the Text: Which was the *Firſt thing* I propoſed to ſhow.

II. *Secondly*; This Doctrine (I ſay) is a Doctrine founded in the *univerſal Reaſon* and *Nature* of *Things*, and inculcated in every part of *Scripture*. That it is a Doctrine founded in the *univerſal Reaſon* and *Nature* of *Things*, appears ſufficiently from what has been already ſaid, under the *foregoing Head*, in opening the *Nature* of the *Doctrine itſelf* laid down in the Text; Where I have ſhown, that all the Promiſes of God, made at all times to his *Church*, to the *viſible Society* of his *Profeſſed Worſhippers* on *Earth*; muſt *of neceſſity*, in the *nature of the Thing*, be underſtood to be made to Them, *merely* conſidered as the *Type* or *Repreſentative* of the *real inviſible Church of God*; that is, of Thoſe who, by the *ſincere* Practice of *True* Religion and Virtue are, in the *Spiritual* Senſe, *really* acceptable to God: *Rom.* ix. 8; *They which are the children of the Fleſh, theſe are not the children of God*; *but the children of the Promiſe are counted for the Seed*. That the *ſame* Doctrine, is moreover inculcated in *every part* of *Scripture*; is very plain in the *Whole Series* both of the *Old* and *New* Teſtament. The *original Promiſe itſelf* made to *Abraham*, was not to *Him* and *his Poſterity* alone, but that *in his Seed* All *the Families of the Earth* Gen. xii. 3. likewiſe ſhould be *bleſſed*. And in a little time after This Promiſe, it is recorded, that meeting with *Melchiſedek* King of *Salem*, a Worſhipper and Prieſt of the Gen. xiv. 18. moſt High God, that is, one who profeſſed and maintained the True Religion in the City over which he ruled; though his Family was not found in the *Genealogy* of the Patriarchs, as the Author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* obſerves; yet *Abraham* acknowledged him as a Worſhipper of the ſame God with himſelf; And not only ſo, but moreover, upon account of the Dignity of his Office, he paid to him, even as to a Superior, the Tenth of all the Spoils, that he had taken in a War with the neighbouring Cities: From whence in the *New Teſtament* this perſon is juſtly repreſented, as having been a Type of Chriſt himſelf. In *following* Ages, when the Nation of the *Jews* were ſettled in the Land which God had promiſed to *Abraham*, and God had himſelf given them a particular Law, by the Obſervance of which they were to be kept diſtinct from all the Nations of the Earth; it was

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still constantly declared, that their Observation of *That Law* was no further acceptable to God, than as it was accompanied *with*, and became a Peculiar Obligation *to*, a more perfect Obedience to the eternal *Moral* Law of Righteousness: *Hath the Lord as Great Delight in burnt-offerings and Sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey, is better than Sacrifice, and to hearken, than the Fat of Rams*; 1 Sam. xv. 22. The Preaching of the *Prophets*, through the *whole period* of the *Jewish* State, was to the same Effect; to warn That People against relying upon their being children of *Abraham*, and Followers of *Moses*; if they were not, in the Practice of *real Virtue and Righteousness*, as well as by the observance of *external Ceremonies*, God's *distinguished and peculiar People*. And *very plain Intimations* are given in several Passages of the Prophets, of God's intention to *accept*, out of *All Nations*, those who *worked Righteousness*; when, of his *own peculiar people*, who professed to be Alone his True Worshippers, every *wicked person* should finally be *rejected* by him. *Mal.* i. 11; *From the Rising of the Sun even unto the going down of the same, my Name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in Every place, Incense shall be offered unto my Name, and a Pure Offering: — saith the Lord of Hosts.* In the *New Testament*, our Lord's Fore-runner *John the Baptist* began his Preaching, with exhorting those who came to his Baptism, *Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our Father*; But *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*. And *our Lord himself*, to the same sort of Persons who relied upon *Abraham*'s being their *Father*; replied *Joh.* viii. 39; that they could not be in the religious sense of the Phrase, *Abraham's Children*; unless they *would Do the works of Abraham*. Again: Upon occasion of the Centurion's showing so *great* a *Faith*, as Jesus *had not* before *found, no not in Israel*; he declares, that *Many shall come from the East and West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven; but the Children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness.* And concerning his *Own Disciples* in particular, the *Professors of his True Religion* under the *Gospel*-state; he saith; *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.* And the Apostles accordingly in All their Writings, are perpetually warning men, that as *God is no Respecter of Persons, but in every Nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him*; so, on the Other hand, whatever mens *Profession* of true Religion be, *God* will *not* be *mocked*; but, according to each one's *real* Behaviour and Practice, *whatsoever a man soweth, That shall be also reap.* That, with God, *there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him.* That in the Gospel-estimation of persons, *there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ*, (that is Obedience to the Commands and Doctrine of Christ,) *is All in all.* That *Circumcision is nothing, and Uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the Commandments of God.* And that *He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly*; (the Apostle intended it should be applied by parity of reason, that *He* likewise *is not a Christian, who is one outwardly*; (*neither is That circumcision, which is outward in the Flesh: But He is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is That of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter; whose Praise is not of Men, but of God.*

Matt. iii. 9.
Matt. viii. 11.
Matt. vii. 21.
Acts x. 34.
Gal. vi. 7.
Rom. x. 12.
Col. iii. 11.
1 Cor. vii. 19.
Rom. ii. 28.

Having therefore shown This to be a Doctrine evidently inculcated in every part of *Scripture*, as well as founded in the *universal Reason* and *Nature* of *Things*: It remains that I proceed now in the

III. *Third* place, according to the Method proposed, to explain *Wherein* lies the Stress of *That particular Argument*, which the Apostle, in confirmation of This Doctrine, draws from *That Historical Similitude* in the *Text*, which he stiles an *Allegory*. *Abraham had Two Sons, the One by a bond-maid, the other by a free-woman*: And *These* (says he) *are the two Covenants*. Now the Force of this Argument, to any one who carefully considers the Context, will appear plainly to be This. The Doctrine the Apostle contends for in This Epistle, is; that Christians of the *Gentiles*, who obeyed the Gospel; being *circumcised with the circumcision — of Christ*, as he expresses himself, *Col.* ii. 11; were entitled to the Blessings of God's peculiar people, equally with *Those of the literal Circumcision*, who observed the Ceremonies of the Mosaick Law. And the *Ground* of This his Assertion, is; that not *Circumcision* or *Uncircumcision*, not one or another *particular Dispensation*;

penſation; but *Obedience to the Commands of God*, whatſoever thoſe *Commandments* be, and under whatever particular *Diſpenſation*; is what the *Divine Favour* is conſtantly annexed to. In oppoſition to This, the *Jews* in the Apoſtles days, were poſſeſſed with a very ſtrong and ſettled *Prejudice*; that ſince *to* the *Iſraelites* confeſſedly *pertained the adoption, and the Glory, and the Covenants, and the Giving of the Law, and the Service of God, and the Promiſes*; ſince *Theirs* confeſſedly *were the Fathers* or Patriarchs, to whom all the Promiſes of God were originally made; it could not poſſibly be true (they thought,) nor conſiſtent with the Promiſes of God made to their Fathers, that theſe *Iſraelites* who had been all along the *peculiar people* or *Church* of God, ſhould at laſt be rejected for not receiving the Goſpel; and that Believers from among the *Gentiles* of *all Nations*, ſhould be received in their ſtead. Now in Anſwer to This *Prejudice*, the Apoſtle argues very *juſtly and ſtrongly*, not only (as I have before ſhown) from the *nature and reaſon of the Thing*, and from the *general* Notion of the *Divine Attributes*; but moreover *in particular*, from the *Analogy* of God's Method and Manner of proceeding, in the giving of *thoſe very Original Promiſes to the Patriarchs*, upon which This *Prejudice* of the *Jews* was founded. *Tell me*, ſays he, *ye that deſire to be under the Law, do ye not hear the Law*? That is; Will ye not attend to the *Analogy* of God's method of proceeding, in *Thoſe very Promiſes* on which ye depend? *For it is written, that Abraham had two Sons, the one by a Bond-maid, the other by a Free-Woman.* That is to ſay: Even *originally*, the Promiſe was not made to all the children of *Abraham*, but to *Iſaac* only: Which was, from the Beginning, a very plain Declaration, that God did not principally intend his Promiſe, to take place in *Abraham*'s Deſcendants according to the *Fleſh*; but in Thoſe who, by a *Faith* or *Fidelity* like His, were in a truer and higher ſenſe the Children and Followers of that great Father of the Faithful. In like manner, and for the ſame reaſon, the Promiſe was not made to *Both* the Sons of *Iſaac*; but to *Jacob* only. And, among the Poſterity of *Jacob*, *All were not Iſrael, which were of Iſrael*; but, in *Elijah*'s days, ſeven thouſand only were the True *Iſrael*; and, in the time of *Iſaiah*, *though the number of the children of Iſrael* was as the ſand of the Sea, yet a Remnant only *was to be ſaved*; and in *Hoſeah*, God ſays, *I will call Them my people, which were not my People; and her beloved, which was not beloved.* The *Strength* therefore and *Force* of the Apoſtle's *Argument* in the Text, lies plainly Here. What *ye yourſelves*, (ſays he,) who are ſo zealous for the obſervation of the Moſaick Law, cannot but acknowledge to have been *originally and always* true; the ſame (ſays he) is true *Now*. What was *true* concerning the Two Sons of *Abraham*, and likewiſe concerning the two Sons of *Iſaac*; who were the *Patriarchs* with whom God's *Covenant* was *originally* made; is, by continuance of the ſame *Analogy*, *true* concerning the *Covenant* eſtabliſhed with the *Families*, and with the *Nation* of the *Jews*, *deſcended* from thoſe *Patriarchs*; it is *true* concerning the *Church of God*, through *all ſucceſſive Ages*; it is *true* concerning the *Jeruſalem* that *Now* is, and concerning *That* which is *to come*. As *Abraham* had *Two Sons*, the *one* by a *Bond-maid*, the *other* by a *Free-woman*: And as *the Son of the Bond-maid*, though, *according to the Fleſh*, no leſs truly his *Natural Deſcendant* than the *Other*, yet was not to be *Co-heir* with *Him* who, by the *Promiſe* of God, was appointed to *inherit*: So ſays the Apoſtle, *the Jeruſalem which Now is*, and is *in Bondage with her children*; the *viſible earthly Church*, which received the external Ceremonial Law from *Mount Sina*; is not, by that *outward general* denomination, intitled to the *eternal Favour* of God; But *the Jeruſalem which is above*, which is the *Mother of us All*, of *All* who by True Faith and Sincere Obedience are pleaſing to God; This *heavenly Jeruſalem*, this *Spiritual inviſible* Church or *City of the Living God* it is, to which all the *Promiſes* of God, made in All Ages to his *Church*, are, in reality, originally and finally appropriated.

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Rom. ix. 4.

This Argument, is a direct, full, and ſtrong Anſwer, to *That Jewiſh Prejudice*; which the Apoſtle, through this Whole Epiſtle, is endeavouring to remove. It clearly and diſtinctly obviates their *Grand Objection*, drawn from the Immutability of the Divine Promiſes to their Fathers; and entirely takes away the very Ground and Foundation of it.

And from hence we may obſerve, how *unreaſonable* it is, as well as profane, to imagine or repreſent the Apoſtle, as founding the *Truth* of a Doctrine upon an *Allegorical*

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gorical Proof. The *Allegory* or *Similitude* he here makes uſe of, is not alledged as a *Proof* of the *Truth* of the *Doctrine* he is aſſerting, but as a *Proof* of the *Falſeneſs and Groundleſsneſs* of a *particular Objection* urged by the unbelieving *Jews* againſt it. The *Doctrine itſelf* is at large *proved* to be *True*, from the *Nature and Reaſon of the Thing*, from the *Perfections of God*, and from the *Whole Tenour of Scripture:* But a *particular Allegation* of the *Jews* againſt it, is, with the greateſt juſtneſs and ſtrength of Argument, *proved* to be *falſe and groundleſs*, from the *Analogy* of a *like* caſe *acknowledged by Themſelves*, in which the *Reaſon of the thing* is the *ſame*.

And from hence therefore, *further*, we may obſerve; that *Proofs* brought by the Apoſtles frequently to the *Jews in particular*, differ from *Proofs* brought to the *Gentiles*, in *This*; not that they were at any time Arguments drawn from things *acknowledged by the Jews*, in *themſelves* otherwiſe *inconcluſive*; but that they were drawn *juſtly* and *ſtrongly*, (as I have ſhown particularly concerning the Argument in the Text,) from things *well known* among the *Jews*, though what the *Gentiles* were *Strangers* to.

The evident *Application* of what has been ſaid, is; that as, in the times of the *Jews* and of the Patriarchs from the Beginning, *all were not Iſrael, which were of Iſrael*; and the *Son of the bond-maid*, though equally the Seed of *Abraham*, yet was *not to be Heir with the Son of the Free-woman*; and all along, *he that was born after the fleſh, perſecuted him that was born after the Spirit: Even ſo it is Now.* All are not *Chriſtians*, who are called after *the Name of Chriſt*: And not the Members of Chriſt's *viſible Church* on *Earth*, but they only who *do the Will of his Father which is in Heaven*, ſhall inherit the Promiſes. They only, who live in the Practice of true Virtue, Righteouſneſs and Goodneſs; ſhall, in the *Spiritual* Senſe, be *counted for the Seed.*

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Rebellion againſt GOD as malignant as Witchcraft.

1 SAM. XV. 23.

For Rebellion is as the Sin of Witchcraft, and Stubbornneſs is as Iniquity and Idolatry:-----

THE Occaſion of theſe Words was this. *Saul* being anointed King over *Iſrael*, was ſent of God upon the following Meſſage delivered to him by the Prophet *Samuel*, *Ver.* 2, of this *chapter: Thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, I remember that which* Amalek *did to* Iſrael, *how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from* Egypt; *Now go, and ſmite* Amalek, *and utterly deſtroy all that they have, and ſpare them not; but ſlay both man and woman,* SERM. LXXXV.

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woman, infant and ſuckling, ox and ſheep, camel and aſs. It may juſtly be eſteemed a Queſtion of ſome Difficulty, whence it might come to paſs, that God ſhould give ſo very ſevere a Command; to do that which, without ſuch an expreſs Commiſſion, could not but have been cenſured as an unreaſonable Cruelty. And indeed there cannot happen any caſe, wherein it would be juſtifiable for any mortal Power, upon his own Authority, to take upon him to deal in ſuch a manner with any Enemy whatſoever. But God, who is the Supreme Author and Lord of all, and who has an unqueſtioned Right to take away that Life which he himſelf at firſt freely gave; and who alone can without error judge when a Nation has filled up the meaſure of their Iniquity, and deſerves to be deſtroyed by an exemplary and univerſal Judgment; and who *in the Life to come* can without reſpect of Perſons diſtinguiſh equitably the Caſe of every individual Perſon, which in the exemplary Severity of a National Judgment was not ſo proper to be diſtinguiſhed *here*; *he* may, very conſiſtently with Juſtice and Equity, command ſuch univerſal Judgments to be inflicted when and where he thinks fit; there being in reality no difference, whether *he* commands a whole Nation, without diſtinction of Perſons, to be deſtroyed by the *Sword*; as in the preſent Caſe of *Amalek*, and that of all the Nations of *Canaan*; or whether he conſumes them by a *Flood*, as at the *univerſal Deluge*; or by *Lightning* from Heaven, as in the Caſe of *Sodom*; or by a ſudden *Earthquake*, as when the Earth opened her Mouth and ſwallowed up *Dathan and Abiram*, with their whole Families at once; or by *Peſtilential Diſeaſes*; or by a *natural Death*. All theſe things, in the hand of *God* who ruleth over all; and who has an undoubted Power and Right over that Life, which he himſelf gave; and who in the World to come can make that exact Diſtinction of Perſons, which there is no Neceſſity ſhould be made here; in *his* hand (I ſay) all theſe things are equally proper Inſtruments of Juſtice; and, without all queſtion, *he* may deſtroy a wicked Nation by what means he himſelf thinks fit. *Saul* therefore being ſent of God with an expreſs Command, to deſtroy every thing in *Amalek* utterly and without exception; executes this Command *in part*, as we read, *ver.* 7, 8; *And* Saul *ſmote the* Amalekites, ------- *and utterly deſtroyed all the people with the edge of the Sword.* But it was *in part* only, that he executed his Commiſſion. For in the ſame place it is recorded, that, contrary to the Command of God, *Saul and the people ſpared* Agag *the King of the* Amalekites, *and took him alive, and the beſt of the Sheep and of the Oxen, and of the Fatlings, and the Lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly deſtroy them; but every thing that was vile and refuſe, that they deſtroyed utterly.*

Here *Saul* was guilty of *Two* very great Faults; *1ſt*, of *Covetouſneſs*, in preſerving for himſelf the Beſt of all thoſe Spoils, which God had expreſly commanded to be deſtroyed utterly; And herein he was the more inexcuſable, becauſe the Wrath of God had been before executed upon the like Occaſion, in an exemplary manner, upon *Achan* who at the deſtruction of *Jericho* had been guilty of the very ſame Offence. *2dly*, He was guilty of *Vanity and Oſtentation*, in taking *Agag* the King of *Amalek* alive, and bringing him with him in Triumph; when God had peremptorily commanded him to deſtroy them All. It is ſaid indeed in the Text, that he ſpared *Agag*; as if it had been an Act of *Mercy* and Compaſſion. But this is only *his own* falſe repreſentation of the Action. For he who made no difficulty of deſtroying even the *Women* and *Children* without diſtinction; it is evident, ſpared the wicked and tyrannical King, of whom it is ſaid by way of eminent cruelty, that his *Sword had made Women childleſs*; it is evident (I ſay) that *Saul*, who had made no Scruple of deſtroying even the Women and Children of the *Amalekites*, ſpared at the ſame time their Wicked King, not out of any tenderneſs and commiſeration, but for *Vanity and Oſtentation*, to triumph over him; or perhaps out of too great an inclination and readineſs to enter into *Friendſhip* with him; And then his Caſe was the ſame with that of *Ahab* afterwards,

terwards, who, being commanded of God to deſtroy *Benhadad* King of *Syria*, after he had taken him Priſoner, called him Brother, and made a League with him; upon which the Lord ſent a Prophet to him, ſaying, *Becauſe thou haſt let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter Deſtruction, therefore thy life ſhall go for his life, and thy people for his people*; 1 Kings xx. 42: In like manner, in the preſent Caſe of *Saul*, God ſpake unto *Samuel*, (ſaying) *ver.* 11th of this Chapter, *It repenteth me that I have ſet up* Saul *to be King; for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my Commandments.* SERM. LXXXV.

And as he thus groſly tranſgreſſed in the firſt *principal Action*, ſo in the following *Circumſtances*, as one Sin naturally draws on another, he fell into other continued provocations. For when *Samuel* came down to meet him, *ver.* 13. he preſumptuouſly declares, (as if either his Obedience had been entire, or the Defect of it could have been concealed from the Prophet;) Behold, *I have* performed *the Commandment of the Lord.* The Falſity of which declaration, when it was immediately laid open, by the Spoils, which he had taken, being there preſent before him; he then *firſt* endeavours to transfer the Fault from *himſelf* to *Others*, *ver.* 15; *The* People, ſays he, *ſpared the beſt of the Sheep and of the Oxen*; As if what the *people* did, was not done by *His* Direction and Authority: Which being too apparent to be denied, he *next* adds an Excuſe, drawn from a pretence of *Religion*, *ver.* 15, 21; *The people took the chief of the things which ſhould have been deſtroyed, to* Sacrifice *unto the Lord thy God*; Which is as much as to ſay: *We have diſobeyed the Commandment of God, in order to ſerve him.* To This the Prophet makes a *double* reply; firſt convincing him of his falſe notion of *Religion*, and then ſeverely reproving him for his ſtubborn Diſobedience. Firſt, he convinces him of his falſe Notion of *Religion*, *ver.* 22; *Hath the Lord as great delight in Burnt-offerings and Sacrifices, as in obeying the Voice of the Lord; Behold, to obey, is better than Sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of Rams.* And then he ſeverely reproves him for his ſtubborn Diſobedience, in the Words of the Text; *For Rebellion is as the Sin of Witchcraft, and Stubbornneſs is as Iniquity and Idolatry:* To rebel againſt the direct Command of God, to diſobey in the inſtance of a plain and poſitive precept, to tranſgreſs againſt the cleareſt Light and moſt expreſs Declaration of the Will of God; This is an Action of the *like* Malignity, even as the Sin of Witchcraft: And the perſiſting ſtubbornly in ſuch Diſobedience, is like the Practice even of Idolatry it ſelf. The Word we here render, *Witchcraft*, ſignifies the following of Divinations and Inchantments, which were Superſtitions forbidden with the ſevereſt Penalties under the Law; and were juſtly looked upon as a renouncing of God, by having recourſe to other real or imaginary Powers in oppoſition to Him. When therefore a Crime is ſaid to be *as the Sin of Witchcraft*; the meaning is, that it is a Fault of ſo deep a Die, of ſo heinous and provoking a Nature, that the obſtinate Commiſſion of it is altogether inconſiſtent with all true Principles of Religion, and, in effect, a total renunciation of them.

The Word, *Iniquity*, in the latter part of the Text, is *Iniquity towards* God, the forſaking his Worſhip, the denying him his true Honour, the turning from him to falſe Gods, or joining them with him; and therefore it is expreſſed by Two words together, Iniquity *and* Idolatry. Which Two words in this place, do not ſignify Two diſtinct Things; but are of the ſame import as if it had been ſaid in One, *the Iniquity* of *Idolatry*, the Perverſeneſs or Unrighteouſneſs of ſerving Falſe Gods. And ſo the latter part of the Text, is, according to the frequent Stile of Scripture, only a repeating and ſtrengthning of the Aſſertion laid down in the *former* part, by expreſſing the ſame thing in other Words in the *latter: Rebellion is as the Sin of Witchcraft, and Stubbornneſs is as Iniquity and Idolatry:* Rebelling, by obſtinate Diſobedience, againſt the *True* God, is like ſerving a *Falſe* one; and Stubbornneſs in obeying God partially, or ſerving him only after our own way or humour, is the ſame thing as not ſerving him at all.

This

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This is the Propoſition contained in the Words of the Text; and it is a Doctrine, of the greateſt importance in Religion. For, as among the *Jews* of *old*, ſo *now* alſo among *Chriſtians*, moſt men have an extreme Abhorrence of direct *Idolatry*, or ſerving of Falſe Gods. And becauſe they hate a *Falſe* Religion, therefore they are preſently apt to cry out with *Saul*; *Behold, I have obeyed the Commandment of the Lord.* But alas! when it comes to be examined, *how* they have obeyed him; or when perhaps their own Conſciences come, in the days of Sickneſs, to put them upon making *themſelves* a ſtrict inquiry into their own Actions; then it appears how *partial* their Obedience has been. Poſſibly they *have*, with *Saul*, deſtroyed the *Amalekites*; have conſtantly oppoſed the open and declared Enemies of Religion. Moreover perhaps, *whatever was vile and refuſe, That they* have *deſtroyed utterly.* Whatever Sins did not eaſily beſet them, nor offer them ſtrong Temptations, from their Conſtitution, their Intereſt, or their Friends; theſe Sins they have both heartily avoided themſelves, and ſeverely condemned them in other Men. But the Beſt *of the Sheep and of the Oxen*; the things which were dear to them, like a Right-hand or a Right-eye; the Sins which laid before them ſtrong Temptations, of Profit, Honour, or Pleaſure; Theſe they could not but *ſpare*, and be unwilling wholly to root them out. And yet, as *Saul* endeavoured to transfer the Blame from *himſelf* upon the *People*; ſo, in the other Caſe alſo, it is not the Men themſelves, it is not their Reaſon and Judgment, that chooſes the Sin; but their inferior Appetites, their Paſſions and Affections chooſe it for them, and drive them into it even perhaps in a manner againſt their Wills; And theſe they are willing ſhould bear the Blame of it, as being *a Law in their Members, warring againſt the Law of their Minds, and bringing them into Captivity to the Law of Sin.* But further; they can ſtill ſtrengthen their Excuſe, by alledging, as *Saul* did, that they do *Sacrifice* alſo *unto the Lord their God*; They are diligent perhaps in all the external Forms and Ceremonies of Religion, and zealous for promoting its *temporal* Power and Authority in the World; And yet, while at the ſame time they live in the habitual Practice of any one known Sin, of Uncleanneſs or Drunkenneſs, of Injuſtice or Uncharitableneſs, of Fraud or Violence, or in the plain Breach of any other of the expreſs Commandments of God; notwithſtanding all their Obſervation of the outward Forms of Religion, notwithſtanding all their Zeal for the Temple of the Lord, notwithſtanding all their Appearances of Piety, not only to others, but perhaps by a ſecret and careleſs Fallacy, even to *themſelves* alſo; yet This their Diſobedience in any one known Inſtance of Immorality, This their *Rebellion, is as the Sin of Witchcraft*; *and* their *Stubbornneſs, is as the Iniquity of Idolatry.* Their refuſing to obey the *True* God, whom they profeſs to worſhip, is like ſerving a *Falſe* one; Or their Stubbornneſs in obeying him partially, and ſerving him only after their own way or humour, is the ſame thing as not ſerving him at all. For wherein conſiſts the Iniquity of Idolatry, and the Wickedneſs of ſerving falſe Gods; but in This, that it derogates from the Majeſty of the True God, and denies him That honour which is *his Alone* peculiar due? And is it not in a manner the ſame thing, to deny the *Authority* of a ſupreme Governor; or to acknowledge his Authority, and yet diſobey his *Laws?* to refuſe to ſerve him at all; or to ſerve him only partially, not in the way which he requires and commands, but according to our own Pleaſure or Fancy? St. *Paul*, makes them that *Know not God*, and them that *obey not the Goſpel*; *i. e.* thoſe that acknowledge not the True God at all, and thoſe that do acknowledge him without obeying him; he makes them equally liable to the ſame *Vengeance*; 2 *Theſſ.* i. 8. Nay, if we conſider things with exactneſs, there will appear much more Excuſe for even the *greateſt Errors*, in the Profeſſion of a *Falſe* Religion; than for *Diſobedience*, under the Knowledge of the *True*. The *only* Reaſon, why the Wrath of God is ſo often and ſo ſeverely denounced in Scripture againſt the *unbelieving* Nations, is *becauſe of* Thoſe things, upon account of which the Apoſtle calls them, at the

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ſame time, *Children of Diſobedience:* And what our Saviour in *One* Goſpel threatens as the ſevereſt of Puniſhments, that a man ſhall have his *Portion aſſigned him with the Unbelievers*; is in *Another* expreſſed, that it ſhall be aſſigned him with the *Hypocrites*. *Hypocriſy* therefore is as the Sin of *Unbelief*, and *partial Obedience*, like *not obeying at all*. Not that there are not *Degrees* of Diſobedience in rebelling againſt God; but that a wilful Stubbornneſs in any *particular* Diſobedience is abſolutely inconſiſtent with the Favour of God; and that there may be a perverſeneſs in perſiſting habitually in ſingle Sins, even like to the Perverſeneſs of a *total* Apoſtacy. One Mortal Wound deſtroys a man, as certainly as many; and incorrigible Obſtinacy in the Practice of *Any* Sin, may be of equal Malignity even as Idolatry it ſelf. Equal, not perhaps as to the *Degree*, of the particular Puniſhment it ſhall bring upon him; but equal as to the *Certainty* of its bringing him in general to *Condemnation*. God requires, that men ſhould ſerve him with their *whole* Heart; and he that ſaid, *Thou ſhalt not commit Adultery*, ſaid alſo, *Thou ſhalt not Kill*. But the Folly of Wicked men, will diſtinguiſh where there is no Diſtinction; and they will ſerve God in what *manner* only, and in what *Inſtances* they pleaſe. This is that great Deceitfulneſs of Sin, that ſecret Hypocriſy, which inſenſibly leads men into a *Rebellion* like to the Sin *of Witchcraft*, and into a *Stubbornneſs* like to the *Iniquity of Idolatry*. The external, the formal, and ceremonial part of Religion, they will poſſibly be very fond of; but the inward and real Virtues of the Mind, Meekneſs and Purity, Humility and Charity, Equity, Simplicity and true Holineſs, for theſe they would gladly commute, and make amends with any Compenſation. This is the great and general Corruption; This has in all times and in all places been the *firſt* and the *laſt* Error in matters of Religion. *Saul*, would needs *Sacrifice unto the Lord his God*, out of thoſe very ſpoils, which he had preſumptuouſly taken, againſt God's expreſs Command. But *Samuel* reproves his Folly, in the Words before the Text; *Hath the Lord as great Delight in Burnt-Offerings and Sacrifices, as in obeying the Voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than Sacrifice; and to hearken, than the Fat of Rams.* In following Ages, the whole Nation of the *Jews*, would in like manner be always very diligent, in offering their Sacrifices and Oblations; as if *That* would make amends, for the Viciouſneſs of their Lives. And yet *how* often did the Scripture admoniſh them to the contrary! *Pſ.* l. 13; *Thinkeſt thou that I will eat the Fleſh of Bulls, or drink the Blood of Goats?* Nay, but *Offer unto God Thankſgiving, and pay thy Vows unto the moſt High.* Eccleſ. v. 1; *Be more ready to hear*, i. e. to Obey, *than to give the Sacrifice of Fools; for they conſider not, that they do evil.* Iſ. i. 11, 16; *To what purpoſe is the Multitude of your Sacrifices unto Me, ſaith the Lord? —— Waſh you, make you clean, —— ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well; —— if ye be willing and obedient, ye ſhall eat the good of the Land.* Hoſ. vi. 6; *I deſired Mercy, and not Sacrifice; and the Knowledge of God, more than Burnt-Offerings.* And, to mention but one Paſſage more, *Mic.* vi. 6; *Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow my ſelf before the High God? Shall I come before him with Burnt-Offerings; with Calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of Rams, or with ten thouſands of Rivers of Oil? —— He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Even in our *Saviour*'s Time, after all theſe repeated Admonitions; the *Phariſees*, which were the ſtricteſt Sect of the *Jews*, ſtill continued to value themſelves upon their mere external Performances; and yet that very Scribe who was ſent to tempt him, could not but acknowledge to our Lord, that he had *ſaid the Truth*, in affirming, that for a man to *love God with all his Heart, and —— his Neighbour as himſelf; was more than all whole Burnt-Offerings and Sacrifices*; St. *Mar.* xii. 33: They would Faſt twice in the Week, and pay Tithes of all that they had, and for a Pretence make long Prayers; while at the ſame Time, they ſecretly devoured Widows Houſes. They would with a ſpecious appearance of Piety dedicate to the *Corban*, that

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is, give to the Service of the Temple, as much as was expected they ſhould beſtow in charitable Uſes; only with intention to defraud their Parents and poor Relations, of that Support, which they had Reaſon, according to the Laws both of God and Nature, to expect from them. They would with great Superſtition waſh the outſide of their Cups and Pots, while the inſide of their own Hearts, was full of unrighteouſneſs and all uncleanneſs. In a word, they would do *Any thing* rather, than what was *Right and ought* to be done; and *therefore* our Saviour declares, that *except our Righteouſneſs exceeds the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, we ſhall in no caſe enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Among the ſeveral Corrupters of *Chriſtianity* likewiſe, What is it that men have not been willing to undertake; what Journies and Pilgrimages; what Hardſhips and Abſtinences; what voluntary Humilities, and uncommanded Auſterities; what profuſe Gifts to Monaſteries or religious Societies, and unbounded Zeal for propagating what they call Right *Opinions*, that is, ſuch as *happen* to prevail, or be in Faſhion amongſt them; inſtead of ſerving God with Simplicity of Devotion, and Loving their Neighbours as themſelves? Not conſidering the Admonition of St. *Paul*, that

2 Tim. ii. 5. *if a man ſtrives for maſteries, yet is he not crowned, except he ſtrive lawfully*; if a man runs in a Race, yet if he takes a ſhorter Way to the Mark, and runs not in that Courſe which is by the Rules appointed and marked out, his Labour is in vain; And if a man profeſſes to ſerve God, yet if he ſerves him not in That Method of Obedience which *God himſelf* requires, but will go a nearer Way to Heaven, either according to his own Humour and Fancy, or in the Way of Any human Invention whatſoever, following the Authority of *Men*, of *Popes*, or *Fathers*, or *Councils*, or *Churches*, or even That of an *Angel from Heaven*, (as St. *Paul* expreſſes himſelf,) inſtead of the *plain Rules* of *Reaſon* and *Scripture*; he may juſtly fall ſhort of his Reward. By conceited Obſtinacy in this way of compenſating for the Breach of God's plain Commands, a *rebellious* and diſobedient Diſpoſition grows upon men by degrees, 'till it becomes like *the Sin of Witchcraft*; and their *Stubbornneſs*, 'till it be like the *Iniquity of Idolatry*. But no *Deſcription* of the Perverſeneſs of this Sort of Sinning, can ſet it forth in ſo lively a manner, as the giving ſome *Hiſtorical Examples* of it; And I ſhall mention Two, which contain a more exact repreſentation of the nature of this Stubbornneſs, than any *Explication of it in Words* could do. The *One*, is the Behaviour of *Saul*, in the *other* Actions of his Life, beſides That referred to in the Text: The *Other*, is the Behaviour of the people of the *Jews*, in their paſſage through the Wilderneſs, towards the promiſed Land. In the firſt

1 Sam. x. 8. place, *Saul* after his Anointment, being commanded to wait *ſeven days* 'till *Samuel* ſhould come to inſtruct him what to do, and offer Sacrifice for him;

xiii. 8. partly through Fear and Diſtruſt, partly through Preſumption, offers a Sacrifice himſelf; which was expreſly contrary to God's Commandment. For

xv. 8. which, being ſeverely reproved by the Prophet, yet in the very next inſtance, when he was commanded utterly to deſtroy the *Amalekites*, he tranſgreſſes again; and, contrary to a like expreſs Command, covetouſly ſpares the beſt of the Spoil, to do Sacrifice (it ſeems) unto the Lord his God.

xviii. 11, 12, 15, 28, 29. After this, he unworthily attempts to kill *David*, becauſe he perceived that the Lord was with him, and had appointed him to ſucceed in the Kingdom:

17. And having failed of ſlaying him with his own hand, he ſends him againſt the *Philiſtines*, in hopes he might be ſlain by *Them*; and gives him his

21. Daughter to Wife, on purpoſe to be *a ſnare unto him*, and that *the hand of*

25. *the Philiſtines might be againſt him.* After This, being convinced of *David's*

xix. 6. Innocency, he ſwore to *Jonathan*, *As the Lord liveth, he ſhall not be ſlain*;

10. and yet preſently after, attempts again to ſlay him with his own hand; and,

11. upon his eſcaping, ſends Meſſengers to kill him in his Houſe. This not

xx. 33. ſucceeding, he attempts the third time to ſlay him with his own hand; and,

xxii. 17, 19. when he had eſcaped, purſues him with an Army; and cruelly killed fourſcore and five Prieſts, and deſtroyed their whole City, for giving him refreſhment

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freſhment in his journey. After This, continuing to purſue *David* with *three thouſand men*, he providentially fell *himſelf* into the Hands of Him whom he purſued; and when *David* ſpared his Life, and ſent him away unhurt, he ſeemed convinced of his own unreaſonableneſs, and confeſſed to *David*, *Thou art more righteous than I; For thou haſt rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.* Yet immediately after, he relapſes anew into his Folly, and purſues him again, to deſtroy him; and falling a *ſecond* time into the Hands of him whoſe Life he ſought, *David* releaſes him *Then alſo* unhurt, and he ſeems to repent again, ſaying; *I have ſinned; return, my ſon David, for I will no more do thee harm, becauſe my Soul was precious in thine eyes this day; behold, I have played the Fool, and have erred exceedingly.* Yet even after *This* the Hiſtory tells us, that the only reaſon why he purſued him not yet *again*, was becauſe *David* had eſcaped further into the Land of the *Philiſtines*. At laſt, finding himſelf forſaken of God, for his repeated Follies; though he had *Himſelf* cut off all the Wizards out of the Land, yet he takes pains to ſearch out and apply himſelf to a Woman reputed to have a Familiar-Spirit; Probably a *Cheat*, like the reſt of the Diviners: For when inſtead of the Woman's practiſing her deluſive Arts, God thought fit, in reproof of *Saul*'s Wickedneſs, to cauſe *in reality* a Likeneſs of *Samuel* to appear; the Text tells us that the *Woman herſelf* was affrighted at the unexpected Appearance, and *cried* out *with a loud voice* in great Surprize when ſhe ſaw *Samuel*. Which ſeems to be a plain evidence that her *Art* was a Cheat; and that the Reality, unexpected to *Her*, was God's own extraordinary Interpoſition. And this takes away the whole Foundation of all thoſe Vain Queſtions, *Whether the Devil had Power to diſturb Samuel or not*, and *how he could foretel ſuch future events*, and the like. The Event was, that *Saul* went away in deſpair; and the next day, having loſt a Battle, killed himſelf. It may well be wondred, how *Saul*, after ſo many repeated admonitions, could ſo often relapſe ſo tooliſhly: But the Anſwer is, that Sin takes away the Heart and Underſtanding of a Man; and that, in another Senſe than is meant in the Text, a Rebellious Diſpoſition *is as the Sin of Witchcraft*, and *Stubbornneſs as the Iniquity of Idolatry.*

xxiv. 2. 17. xxvi. 2. 21. xxvii. 4. xxviii. 6, 7. 12. xxxi. 4.

The *Other* inſtance I mentioned, is the Behaviour of the *Jews* in that paſſage through the Wilderneſs. In the firſt place *they remembered not God's wonders in Egypt, but provoked him at the red Sea*, ſaying, *Becauſe there were no graves in Egypt, thou haſt taken us away to die in the wilderneſs.* Then, when he had carried them thro' the Sea by a Miracle, they *wanted water to drink*; and he had brought them over the *Sea*, (it ſeems,) *to kill them with thirſt.* Upon which he fetched water for them out of the *Rock:* And Then they ſaid; *He ſmote the ſtony rock indeed, that the water guſhed out, and the ſtreams flowed withal; but can he give* bread *alſo, or provide* Fleſh *for his people?* To ſatisfy *This* their luſting, *he commanded the clouds above, and opened the doors of Heaven; He rained down manna upon them for to eat, and gave them food from Heaven*; And Then they ſaid, *There is nothing at all beſides this* Manna *before our eyes.* Nay, *he rained* alſo fleſh *upon them as thick as duſt, and feathered fowls like as the ſand of the Sea: But for all* This, *they ſinned yet more*, and provoked the moſt high in the Wilderneſs: *They envied Moſes*, in the caſe of *Dathan and Abiram*; *and* angred *Aaron the Saint of the Lord: They made a calf in Horeb, and worſhipped the ſimilitude of a Calf that eateth Hay: They joined themſelves alſo unto Baal-peor, and ate the Offerings of the Dead. Laſtly*, when they came to the Land of *Canaan*, and were commanded to enter into it; then *they deſpiſed that pleaſant land, and gave no credit unto his Word*; then the land was *a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof*, and it was defended by *Giants*, and had *Cities great and walled up to Heaven*, and *could not* be conquered. But when, upon This, God commanded them to return back into the Wilderneſs; then on the contrary they *would* go up into the land which the Lord had promiſed them, and *would* fight for it preſumptuouſly, and were defeated. In all theſe Inſtances, *their rebellious* diſpoſition *was as the Sin of Witchcraft, and their Stubbornneſs like to the Iniquity of Idolatry.*

Pſ. cvi. 7. Ex. xiv. 11. Ex. xvii. 2. Numb. xx. 3. Pſ. lxxviii. 21. Numb. xi. 3. Pſ. lxxviii. 25, 28. Numb. xi. 6. Pſ. lxxviii. 32. Deut. ix. 7, 24. xxxi. 27. Pſ. cvi. 16, 19. Ex. xxxii. 1. Pſ. cvi. 28. Num. xxv. 2. Pſ. cvi. 24. Num. xiii. 32. Deut. i. 26, 43.

The

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The Application is very eaſy, to the caſe of *every* ſtubborn Sinner *in particular:* And St. *Paul* has expreſly applied it for us *in general*; 1 Cor. x. 6; *Theſe things*, ſaith he, *were our examples, to the intent* we *ſhould not luſt after evil things, as they alſo luſted; Neither be ye idolaters, as were ſome of them;---neither let us commit fornication, as ſome of them committed; neither let us tempt Chriſt, as ſome of them alſo tempted;----neither murmur ye, as ſome of them alſo murmured, and were deſtroyed of the Deſtroyer:* For *all theſe things happened unto them for examples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

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All Sin proceeds from ſome Miſapprehenſion of GOD.

JER. v. 4.

Therefore I ſaid, Surely theſe are poor, they are fooliſh; for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the Judgment of their God.

IN the following Diſcourſe, I ſhall conſider ſome of the principal Inſtances, wherein men become *poor* and *fooliſh* in matters of Religion, becauſe *they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God.* And

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Firſt; Some there are, who indulge a *ſceptical* Humour, and do not believe God's particular providence and inſpection over all events. This was the opinion, of a certain Sect among the ancient Philoſophers; and accordingly as they thought the life of *God* conſiſted merely in eaſe and doing nothing; ſo they willingly perſwaded themſelves that the Happineſs of *Man* conſiſted, in nothing

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thing but Vanity and Pleaſure: They thought that *God* had no regard to what good or evil was done by men on earth; and accordingly *they themſelves* had no regard to any thing, but Luxury and Pleaſure; They ſaid in their hearts, *God hath forgotten, he hideth away his face* and *he will never ſee it. Tuſh, ſay they, does God perceive? Is there Knowledge in the moſt High?* The Pſalmiſt ſpeaks of ſuch perſons, not who were abſolute Atheiſts and thought God knew not what they did at all; but who thought it *beneath* his divine Majeſty, to *regard* what men did.

Now from what ſort of Miſapprehenſion concerning God this proceeded, is not difficult to diſcover: They thought, and ſo far indeed very juſtly, that God could not but be a perfectly Happy Being, *infinitely* removed from all that care and labour, thoſe difficulties and anxieties, which make a great part of the miſery of human Nature; But muſt he therefore be altogether an *unactive* Being? Cannot he with the ſame eaſe wherewith he *made* the World, (a work of infinite Power, Wiſdom and Counſel;) cannot he with the ſame eaſe *govern* it alſo and preſide over it? Cannot he who at one view ſees and obſerves all things that are done in the World; cannot he concern himſelf for the *benefit* and *well-government* of his Creatures, by puniſhing the Evil and rewarding the Good; without diminiſhing from his own infinite Happineſs? Eſpecially ſince Juſtice and Holineſs are no leſs eſſential to him, than Happineſs, and even *That* Happineſs itſelf conſiſts, not in Reſt and doing nothing, but in exerciſing and diſplaying thoſe Perfections, of infinite Wiſdom, Holineſs and Juſtice. It is manifeſt therefore, that the folly of ſuch Perſons as theſe, proceeds from a very weak and indeed *ridiculous* Miſapprehenſion of the Happineſs of the divine Nature; that they *know not* at all *the way of the Lord*, nor have *any* right underſtanding of the Perfections of *God*.

Secondly; Others there are, who though they cannot deny God's particular Providence and Inſpection over all things, yet will not believe that he has ſo great a Concern, about the *moral* good or evil actions of Men. This is the caſe of thoſe Libertines, who though they pretend indeed to *acknowledge* the obligations of *Natural* Religion in Oppoſition *only to Revelation*, yet in reality it is plain they have no true Senſe of the difference of moral Good and Evil at all, nor any juſt and worthy Apprehenſion of the Moral Attributes of God. The marks of infinite Knowledge, Power and Wiſdom, in the contrivance of this Fabrick of the World, and in the diſpoſing all things in that order and harmony, which men may admire and adore, but can never perfectly underſtand and comprehend; are ſuch convincing and undeniable Proofs of the *Being* of God, and of the *Natural Perfections* of his eſſence, that they cannot indeed deny that there is ſuch a *Powerful* and *Wiſe* Being; But that he is indued alſo with thoſe *moral* Perfections of infinite Juſtice, Goodneſs and Truth; and that conſequently he cannot be pleaſed with any Creature, which does not endeavour, in its proportion and capacity, to imitate theſe divine perfections; this they are by no means willing to grant, as being inconſiſtent with thoſe vicious courſes, from which they are reſolved not to depart. Now Theſe alſo are manifeſtly *poor* and *fooliſh* in the notions they frame to themſelves concerning God; as if his *moral* Attributes were not neceſſarily connected with his Natural ones, and as if it were poſſible that he might be infinitely Wiſe and Powerful, without being Holy, Juſt and True. For are there not as evident footſteps of the *Juſtice* and *Goodneſs* of God's government of the World, as there are of the *Power* and the *Wiſdom* of it? or is it poſſible that *He* ſhould be an All-powerful and All-wiſe Governor, whoſe Government is not ſettled on Juſtice, Goodneſs and Truth? What are Wiſdom and Knowledge, without Juſtice and Veracity, or Dominion and Power, without Holineſs, Righteouſneſs and Goodneſs; but Qualifications that may belong to the worſt, and moſt hateful Being in the World? So that to bereave the divine Majeſty of thoſe *moral* Attributes, is to take away from it entirely the nature and notion of God. In a Word; that Juſtice and Truth are in themſelves things good and excellent, and *fit* to be the Rules of Government; the Adverſaries of Religion themſelves cannot deny. If then God be *Wiſe*, that he cannot but *know* what is fit; if he be *all-powerful*, that he cannot be *compelled*;

pelled; if he be *all-knowing*, that he cannot be *deceived*; it follows that he *will* alſo do what is fit; and then there *muſt* be a difference made between Good and Evil, and a reward or puniſhment appointed for Virtue or Vice. SERM. LXXXVI.

Thirdly; There are ſome Others, who though they are very ſenſible of the particular Regard God has to the morally good or evil actions of men, yet ſo far are they from having any right knowledge of *the way of the Lord*, and of *the judgments of their God*, that conſidering the abſolute Sovereignty and Dominion of God, they are ſo ſuſpicious of things being before determined by an unalterable Fate, that they cannot but be remiſs and fall ſhort of that diligence in governing the actions of their Lives, which is requiſite to the making men truly virtuous. And this hath been the caſe of many among Chriſtians; who, though they are firmly perſwaded both of the *juſtice and goodneſs* of God *in general*, yet being ſuſpicious of things being originally fixed by they know not what ſecret and unalterable fatality, they have remitted of their diligence in a virtuous courſe. And undoubtedly it cannot but cut the Sinews of all diligence in virtue, if men be ſuſpicious at the ſame time, that poſſibly they may not profit thereby: It cannot be, that a man ſhould, with hearty diligence and patient continuance in well-doing, endeavour to work out his own Salvation with fear and trembling, who is not perſwaded that God has *really* given him power both to will and to do, and that he ſhall be accepted according to his diligence and conſtancy, in exerciſing that power. The contrary error has plainly ſprung, from a miſtaken notion of the Abſolute Sovereignty and Dominion of God. For though God is indeed abſolute in Dominion and infinite in Power, yet he can no more make uſe of theſe Prerogatives to deal hardly with any of his Creatures, than he can exerciſe one Attribute in oppoſition to another. God may do with his creatures whatever he wills or pleaſes: but his will and pleaſure is always regulated by the eternal Laws, of Juſtice and Goodneſs. Since therefore he has placed Man here upon earth as in a State of probation, and ſet before him Life and Death as the reward of Virtue and the puniſhment of Vice; exhorting him, encouraging him, intreating him *in* his Goſpel and *by* his Miniſters, to chuſe Life and to refuſe Death; it cannot poſſibly be, that any one who is ſincere in his Endeavours, can fail of being truly religious, or that any one who is truly religious, can fall ſhort of eternal Life. So that whatever determinations in Other reſpects God may have made, ſecret and unknown to us; yet This we are as ſure of, as we are of the Truth and Faithfulneſs of God, that there cannot poſſibly be any determination with him, whereby a virtuous man ſhall be excluded from Happineſs, or a wicked man ſecured from eternal Miſery.

Fourthly and *Laſtly*; Others there are, who inſtead of *knowing* and underſtanding the *judgment of God*, as the Scripture exhorts; on the contrary perſwade themſelves, that the Threatnings of God are not ſo terrible, as the Scripture ſeems to repreſent them; or that he will not be ſo ſevere in the execution of them, as the Goſpel teaches us to apprehend. And This proceeds plainly from a falſe Notion, concerning the Mercy and Goodneſs of God. Men who profeſs themſelves Chriſtians, make no doubt but there *is* a God, who created all things by the word of his Power, and upholds and governs them by the wiſdom of his Providence: They make no doubt alſo, but that God inſpects all the actions of his Creatures, and that he *will reward* the Good, and in ſome meaſure *puniſh* alſo, at leaſt ſome kinds and degrees of evil: But then, that his threatnings are ſo terrible, as the Scripture repreſents them; and that he will be ſo ſevere in the execution of them, as the Goſpel teaches us to apprehend; this they can very hardly perſwade themſelves to believe. They know the Mercy of God is infinite; and therefore they hope it will ſwallow up his Juſtice: They know the Goodneſs of God is unexhauſtible; and therefore they hope he will not puniſh *wickedneſs* ſo ſeverely as he has threatned, nor exact ſo *much virtue* as he has required in his Goſpel, and upon theſe grounds they go on in a courſe of Licentiouſneſs, hoping that God will either accept their Repentance, when they have ſerved themſelves of Sin all the beſt part of their Lives; or at leaſt that he will have ſome Mercy and Compaſſion on them, and not puniſh them with ſuch Severity as the Goſpel ſeems to threaten.

Now

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Now in order to lay open the vanity of these false hopes, I shall endeavour to show briefly; 1*st*, That God's Mercy, however infinite, yet is not so great as to interfere with his Justice; 2*dly*; That we have no reason in the world to expect, that God will be less severe in the execution of his punishments, than he has been in his threatnings rightly understood; and 3*dly*, That God will not accept any less degree of Righteousness and Virtue, than he has declared in his Holy Gospel.

I. *First*; God's Mercy, however infinite, yet is not so great, as to interfere with his Justice. God is as merciful, as is consistent with the Holiness and the Purity of his Nature, and with the Honour of his divine Laws: His Mercy therefore extends itself to all penitent Sinners, that is, to all who reform and amend; but it can never possibly be reconciled to Sin, nor extend itself to any one who continues wicked. To go on therefore in a course of any known Sin, in hopes that notwithstanding our impenitence God will finally be merciful and have compassion upon us, is, when pardon is offered with some particular Limitations, to put ourselves voluntarily in the number of those, who are expressly excepted from the benefit of that indulgence: And to continue in a wicked State *for the present*, with a design to deliver ourselves *at the last* by Repentance; is wilfully to suffer Shipwreck, in hopes of being saved at the last by a Plank. Our natural reason teaches us, that God is infinitely Merciful; but it teaches us also that he is perfectly Just: and the Scripture is not more large, in describing the Bowels of the divine Mercy, than it is in setting forth the Severity of his Justice. It teaches us that God is indeed full of Compassion, Long-suffering, and of great Pity; that he loves not to grieve the children of Men, nor takes any delight in the destruction of a Sinner; that he is willing to forgive, yea earnestly desirous that men would be led by his Mercies, or driven by his Judgments to Repentance: But then it tells us also, that our God is a consuming Fire; and that our Saviour himself, who gave himself a ransom for all those who believe and obey him, shall come *in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not his Gospel*; That the Wrath of the *Lamb himself* shall be insupportable, as well as the Face of Him that sitteth on the Throne. It assures us that the Gospel, that Last and gracious Covenant of Mercy and Forgiveness, is yet the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, wherein the wrath of God is most expressly revealed from Heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men: It tells us of a *lake that burneth with fire and brimstone*; of *the worm that dieth not, and of the fire that is not quenched*; that they who obey not the Gospel, *shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*; and that *it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment*, than for those who *neglect* this *great Salvation*, and *do despite unto the Spirit of grace*.

II. *Secondly*; We have no reason in the World to expect, that God will be less severe in the execution of his punishments, than he has been in his threatnings rightly understood, and not misapplied by melancholy or enthusiastick Apprehensions. God has threatned Death and everlasting Destruction, as the Punishment of incorrigible disobedience in *general*; and in *particular*, to every *sort* and *degree* of Wickedness, a proportionable *sort* and *degree* of Torment, *in* that State of everlasting Destruction, or of final exclusion from the Kingdom of God: And if men notwithstanding all the mercies and the gracious invitations, notwithstanding all the judgments and the terrors of the Lord, will continue incorrigible, they have no reason to expect but he will really condemn them. God's Goodness is infinite and perfect; but it is also so tempered with Wisdom and Justice, as makes a more compleat character of the Judge of all the earth, than an infinite indulgence would do. His Love to Mankind is sincere, and he really designs our happiness, if we hinder it not ourselves; He has given us abundant evidence of That; and especially in his sending to us his own Son, to reveal the grace of the Gospel for our Salvation: But then he has also as effectually discovered to us, that his Tenderness towards Mankind is not so great, as his Love of true Virtue and his Hatred of Vice; and if we

will

will be wicked, he has given us ſatisfactory proof that it is not contrary to the Goodneſs of his Nature to permit us to be miſerable. The Angels which kept not their firſt eſtate, but left their own habitation, he has reſerved in everlaſting Chains under darkneſs, unto the judgment of the great day: Thoſe great and powerful Spirits, when by an unreaſonable and ungrateful Diſobedience they had made themſelves unworthy of that Glory and Happineſs, in which God had created them; he would not diſhonour his Laws and his Government by ſuffering them to continue happy in their diſobedience, but immediately baniſhed them from the ſeat of bleſſedneſs into the regions of eternal darkneſs: And can *we* be ſo weak as to imagine, that God has a greater Tenderneſs for mortal Man, than he had for thoſe glorious and immortal Spirits; that he ſhould remit *our* puniſhment without our forſaking our Sins? So *far* indeed as *our* Nature is more infirm and pitiable than *theirs*, ſo far God *has* made a proportionable allowance in the Terms of the Goſpel: But that he ſhould ſpare obſtinate and impenitent men, and ſuffer *Them*, more than Angels, to *defy* his divine Majeſty; for This, there is *no* Reaſon in nature. When he had created the Earth perfectly good, and every way fitted for a happy life, he curſed it becauſe of Sin, and blaſted the Beauty of this glorious Fabrick, becauſe man was not worthy to continue in ſo happy a Seat. Again, when the wickedneſs of men was grown great upon the earth, God ſwept them away with a flood; and though vain men would not be convinced by *Noah*'s preaching, but that God was more merciful than to deſtroy a whole World; yet This threatning was really executed upon them. After this, the people of *Sodom* and *Gomorrha*, were deſtroyed with fire and brimſtone from Heaven; and ſet forth an example, ſuffering the vengeance of eternal fire. The *Jews* alſo, when they rebelled againſt God, how were they deſtroyed with Sword and Fire, with Famines and Peſtilences, with Wars and ſtrange Deſolations? Theſe things are all written for our enſamples, upon whom the ends of the World are come. And if theſe will not convince us of the juſt Severity of God; we may conſider the Miſeries which happen in our own Age and Sight. All the Afflictions and Troubles that fall upon Mankind; Pains and Diſeaſes of Body; and the deeper griefs of wounded Spirits and deſpairing minds; are all directly or indirectly the conſequences of Sin. And if our own eyes convince us that theſe things are done in the *green tree*; if we ſee that God executes theſe judgments in this preſent World, and upon mixt multitudes, where the righteous and the wicked muſt needs frequently be involved in the calamity together; what greater Miſeries muſt we ſuppoſe are reſerved in ſtore againſt That time, when the Judge of the whole Earth ſhall have ſeparated the Goats from the Sheep, and ſhall pour out his fury upon the wicked by themſelves? His Puniſhments indeed, will not be greater than the wickedneſſes of Men deſerve; neither will they *even Then* in that final perdition be *promiſcuous*, or *diſproportionate* in the *particular* to the caſe of every ſingle perſon's proper demerit; but in general, however *we* may preſumptuouſly rely upon the infinite Mercy of God, we ſee it is not inconſiſtent with the Goodneſs of his divine Nature, to make wicked men miſerable.

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III. *Thirdly* and *Laſtly*; GOD will not accept any leſs degree of Virtue and Holineſs, than he has required in his holy Goſpel. He has required that we be holy and virtuous, univerſally and conſtantly; And as it is certain he will not accept a *partial* obedience, ſo we have no good reaſon to expect he will be ſatisfied with a *late* and ineffectual Repentance. His Mercy extends itſelf to all that heartily repent, and for the future obey the laws of the Goſpel; But it does not oblige him to reward thoſe who obey him but in part, or who may ſeem to repent when it is too late to renew their obedience. In vain therefore do *They* hope to become Subjects of the Mercy of God, who either live in the breach of any one plain Commandment while they obſerve the reſt, or who intend to obſerve them *all*, when they ſhall no longer have any temptation to break *any*. The Goſpel, is in-

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deed a Covenant or Declaration of Grace and Mercy to Mankind; but it is alſo a revelation of the righteous Judgment of God *againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men*; Rom. i. 18. And a very groundleſs miſapprehenſion of the divine Mercy it is, to expect that it will prevent the execution of thoſe juſt judgments, which are denounced with the greateſt terror in the very covenant of Mercy.

Let us not then deceive ourſelves with vain imaginations, but be vigilant and careful, that our Repentance be timely, and our obedience univerſal; So ſhall we become fit Subjects of the Mercy of God, and meet to be partakers of the inheritance with the Saints in light.

SERMON

SERMON LXXXVII.

Of Religious Melancholy.

JOB vi. 4.

For the Arrows of the Almighty are within me, the Poiſon whereof drinketh up my Spirit; The Terrors of God, do ſet themſelves in array againſt me.

THESE Words are part of the Complaint of *Job* under that great Affliction, which God was pleaſed to ſend upon him, for the Trial of an exemplary and unſhaken Virtue: And becauſe it was ſent upon him for *That Reaſon* only, and not as any Mark of the divine Diſpleaſure; therefore, how great ſoever the Calamity was in all other reſpects, yet was it by no means inſupportable; becauſe there ſtill remained to him the great Foundation of Comfort, in the Aſſurance of a good Conſcience, and the Expectation of God's final Favour. *He had been all his days a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God, and eſchewed evil,* (ch. i. 8;) And he had in his own Mind, even in the midſt of his Affliction, the Satisfaction to reflect with Pleaſure upon his paſt Behaviour, and to ſtrengthen his Reſolutions of continuing in the ſame Courſe for the Future. *As God liveth,* ſaith he, *who has taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, who has vexed my Soul; All the while my Breath is in me, and the Spirit of God is in my Noſtrils; My lips ſhall not ſpeak Wickedneſs, nor my tongue utter deceit.* —— *'Till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me; My righteouſneſs I hold faſt, and will not let it go; my heart ſhall not reproach me, ſo long as I live;* (*ch.* xxvii. 2.) And (*Ch.* xiii. 15;) *Though he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him; but I will maintain my own ways before him; He alſo ſhall be my Salvation, for an hypocrite ſhall not come before him.* He knew, and maintained

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tained it againſt the Opinion of all his Friends, that God was not angry with him, even at the Time he afflicted him. He knew, that after a ſhort Tryal, God would reſtore him to his former Proſperity. And if not; yet he *knew that* his *Redeemer lived, and* was to *ſtand at the latter day upon the Earth*; *and though after* his *Skin, Worms deſtroyed* his *Body, yet in* his *Fleſh ſhould* he *ſee God*; *Whom* he *ſhould ſee for* himſelf, *and* his *eyes ſhould behold, and not another*; *though* his *reins* were *conſumed within him.* Theſe conſiderations very much alleviated, even that ſingularly great and unparallelled Affliction, wherewith God was pleaſed to try this righteous perſon, and make his Patience exemplary to all ſucceeding Generations. Wherefore though, in the Nature of the *Thing itſelf*, in the Circumſtances of the *external* Affliction, no Calamity could well be heavier than that of *Job*; yet, when the Diſpoſition of the *Perſon* comes alſo to be taken into the Act, there *is* a Trouble far greater than His: Namely, when the Storm falls where there is no preparation to bear it; when the Weight is laid, where there is no Foundation to ſupport it; when the Aſſault is made from *without*, and *within* is nothing to reſiſt it. And *That* is, when the Judgments of God fall upon a *wicked* Perſon; when the Providence of God ſmites him from *without*, and his own Conſcience torments him *within*; when That which *ſhould* be his only Comfort and Support in the day of Trouble, proves *itſelf* the greateſt and moſt inſupportable part of his Calamity: This is indeed, a truly miſerable Caſe; and can be exceeded by nothing, but That whereof it is a Part and a Fore-runner, even the Stingings of the Worm that never dieth. In all *other* Caſes, the *Spirit of a man will ſuſtain his Infirmity*; But when the *Spirit* itſelf is thus *wounded, who can bear it?* Then it is doubly true, what the Text emphatically deſcribes, that *the Arrows of the Almighty are within* them, *the poiſon whereof drinketh up* their *Spirits*; *The Terrors of God do ſet themſelves in array againſt* them. They cannot ſay with *Job*; *ſhall we receive good at the hands of God, and ſhall we not receive evil? The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away*; *Bleſſed be the Name of the Lord:* But the Remorſe of an impenitent Conſcience drives them to deſpair; and, having no ſerious Thoughts of an effectual Repentance, their Mind is, like *Judas's*, tormented with an inextricable Perplexity. The Scripture repreſents the Miſery of ſuch a State, by very elegant Similitudes: *The wicked are like the* troubled Sea *when it cannot reſt, whoſe Waters caſt up mire and dirt*; Iſ. lvii. 20. And in the *ſecond* Book of *Eſdras*, ch. xvi. 77; *Wo be unto them that are bound with their Sins, and covered with their Iniquities*; *Like as a* Field *is covered over with* Buſhes, *and the Path thereof covered with* Thorns, *that no man may travel through*; *It is left undreſſed, and is caſt into the Fire, to be conſumed therewith.* There is ſtill a *Third* State, moſt melancholy, and truly pitiable; and that is of thoſe, who neither by the immediate Appointment of *Providence*, as in the Caſe of *Job*; nor by the proper Effect of their own *Wickedneſs*, as in the Caſe of an *Evil Conſcience*; but by their own *Imagination* and groundleſs *Fears*, by Indiſpoſition of *Body* and Diſorder of *Mind*, by *Falſe Notions* of *God* and of *Themſelves*, are made very miſerable in their own Minds. They fancy, though without ſufficient reaſon, that *the Arrows of the Almighty are within* them, *the poiſon whereof drinketh up* their *Spirits*; *And* that *the Terrors of God, do ſet themſelves in array againſt* them. This is indeed a Caſe, which deſerves the higheſt Pity and Compaſſion, and ought to be treated with the utmoſt Tenderneſs. For, according to the different Circumſtances of the Perſons, and the different Occaſions from whence the Diſtemper proceeds; ſo ought we to endeavour, to apply different and proper Remedies. It is very difficult, in a Matter wherein there is ſo great Variety, to enumerate the ſeveral Caſes that may happen; and yet, without diſtinguiſhing them in ſome meaſure under their proper Heads, general Directions can be but of ſmall uſe, and of very uncertain Application in Practice. The Principal Inſtances therefore that moſt uſually occur, and the Chief Occaſions of ſuch Melancholy Apprehenſions, are ſuch as follow, *1ſt*; A mere Indiſpoſition or Diſtemper of Body: *2dly*; A Complaint of Want of Improvement under the Exerciſe of Religious Duties, and Want of a fervent Zeal and Love towards God: *3dly*; An Apprehenſion of being excluded from Mercy, by ſome poſitive Decree and Fore-appointment of God: *4thly*; A Fear of having committed the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt: *5thly*; An Uneaſineſs ariſing from Wicked and Blaſphemous

Blaſphemous Thoughts: And *Laſtly*, a Terror ariſing from the Conſciouſneſs of paſt Sins, and from the Want of Aſſurance of their being certainly pardoned. SERM. LXXXVII.

1ſt; The *Firſt* and the moſt uſual Cauſe of Religious Melancholy; which is *ſometimes* the *only* and *entire* Occaſion of it; and which almoſt *always accompanies* and *increaſes* it, when it ariſes from any of the *Other* Cauſes; is *Indiſpoſition or Diſtemper of Body*. And This, though it is not properly and immediately of religious conſideration, yet it is by no means to be neglected, ſlighted, or deſpiſed. For as the Mind operates continually upon the Body, ſo the Body likewiſe, whilſt they continue united, will of neceſſity influence and operate upon the Mind. And it is not unuſual, to ſee the good Underſtanding even of a *reaſonable* perſon, born down and over-burdened by Bodily Diſorder. This therefore is a Matter, which muſt by no means be made light of; but Advice muſt be given ſuitable to the Caſe, and proper Remedies applied to the Diſtemper. The Chief Difficulty in ſuch Caſes generally is, to perſwade the Perſon, that That Trouble, which he conceives to be in his *Mind*, is more truly and properly an Indiſpoſition of *Body*. But he may moſt likely be prevailed upon to ſeek for proper Aſſiſtance in that Reſpect, by conſidering that even where there is *real* ground for Trouble of Mind, yet That being uſually augmented by concurrent Diſorder of Body, Application of ſuitable Remedies may with beſt Succeſs be at the ſame Time made for Both. And it is not eaſy to imagine, how upon remedying One, even ſenſible Perſons have, beyond what they could poſſibly have expected, found themſelves relieved in the Other. The principal Sign, by which we may judge when the Indiſpoſition is chiefly or wholly in the Body, is This; that the Perſon accuſes himſelf highly *in general*, without being able to give any inſtances *in particular*; that he is very apprehenſive, of he does not well know what; and fearful, yet can give no Reaſon why; that he thinks very ill of himſelf, and yet has been guilty of no Great Faults; and fears that God alſo will condemn him, and yet is not ſenſible by what preſumptuous Tranſgreſſion he has merited ſuch Diſpleaſure. In Theſe Circumſtances, the Trouble, though without ſufficient Cauſe, may be very great; and the Miſery real, though without good Foundation; and therefore it deſerves the greateſt Pity and Compaſſion, and is not to be let alone to increaſe by Neglect; but all endeavours ought to be uſed, to remove the Bodily Indiſpoſition; and the Perſon at the ſame time perſwaded as much as poſſible, that All Diſturbance of Mind, not ariſing from any particular, diſtinct, known Occaſion; is chiefly owing to ſuch Indiſpoſition, and will be removed together with it.

2dly; The next Cauſe of Uneaſineſs and Diſturbance of this Kind, is a Complaint of *Want of Improvement* under the Exerciſe of Religious Duties, and *Want* of a *fervent Zeal and Love* towards God. As hardened and obdurate Sinners, do by the open Neglect and Contempt of Religious Duties, apparently *grow worſe*, and run perpetually into more Ungodlineſs; ſo, many piouſly and well-diſpoſed Perſons, but of timorous and melancholy Conſtitutions, are under continual Apprehenſions that they do *not grow better*; that they make little or no *Improvement*, in the Ways of Religion; and that they cannot find in themſelves ſuch a *fervent Zeal and Love* towards God, as they think is neceſſary to denominate them good Chriſtians. Now if by *Want of Improvement*, theſe perſons mean, that, notwithſtanding their conſtant Attendance upon the external Duties of Religion, yet they do not find their *Obedience* to the Commands of God more uniform, their Paſſions more ſubdued, their Lives more ſober and regular, their good Temper towards all men more univerſal, their Temptations to Sin more conſtantly and more ſtrongly reſiſted; This indeed is ſuch a Want of Improvement, as they have juſt reaſon to be troubled at; and nothing can or ought to remove This Trouble of Mind, but ſuch an actual Amendment of Life and Reformation of Manners, as the Goſpel indiſpenſably requires; and the promoting of which, is the main End and ultimate Deſign of all the outward Acts of Religious Devotion. But if by Want of Improvement, they mean only Want of *Warmth and Affection* in the Performance of their Duty, which Duty they nevertheleſs do perform ſincerely and carefully; then there is no juſt ground for Trouble of Mind upon That Account: but they muſt be taught to comfort themſelves by conſidering, that the different degrees of Affection with which *different* Perſons ſerve God, depends much more upon the accidental Difference of their Conſtitu-

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tions of Body, than it is any true Measure of the Goodness of their Minds; that in *one and the same* person, there will unavoidably be different degrees of Affection at different Times, according to the present Temper of his Body, the Order or Disorder of his Spirits, the natural Passions and Commotions of his Mind, without any real change in his moral Dispositions; that no man can at *all times* keep up an *equal* vigour of Mind; and those who are the *most* zealous, and the *most constantly* so, are oftentimes not the best men; their Zeal being frequently without knowledge, their eagerness often bent upon wrong things, and the warmth of their Affections fixed most strongly upon matters of the least importance: nay, that where the Affections are most rightly directed, and fixed upon their true and propereſt Object; yet even There, those who serve God upon *rational and solid Motives*, and steddily obey his Commandments upon the calm and strong Motives of a *right Understanding*, seem to act upon a higher and more excellent Principle, than those who are led into his Service with the warmest *Passions* and with the strongest *Affections*. In like manner, if by Want of *Love* towards God, any man means that he has not settled in his Mind such a just Regard towards God, as determines him carefully to observe his Laws; This indeed is the greatest and most reasonable Cause in the World, of Disturbance of Mind; and such Trouble of Mind can be removed by nothing, but by immediate Repentance, and better Obedience. But if by Want of *Love* towards God, he means only, that notwithstanding his best endeavours in the course of a virtuous Life, yet he cannot find in himself that *Passionate Love* of the Supreme Good, which he finds some Writers have described in a sublime, poetical, and perhaps indeed in an unintelligible manner; This is no just Ground of Uneasiness at all. For he may be directed to consider, that the Scripture speaks otherwise concerning the matter; telling us plainly and intelligibly, that *the Love of God is This, that we keep his Commandments*; And if any man fancies that he loves God in a lofty and abstract manner, while at the same time he hates and is uncharitable towards his Brother, or lives in the Breach of any other of the Divine Commands; the Apostle assures us that such a one is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him. On the contrary, whoever sincerely *obeys* the Commandments of *God*, in the Course of a virtuous and religious Life, needs no other Mark or Proof of his *Love* towards him. For the best and most infallible *Sign or Token* of any thing, is the *Thing signified* itself; And he that by his Works makes evidence of the Reality of the *Thing*, needs not much trouble himself to compare and examine it by Definitions of *Words*. Whatever Principle *Obedience* proceeds from, even though it be but the *Fear* of Punishment, and Dread of the Divine Wrath; which some have without reason imagined to be so slavish and sordid a Passion, that God would not accept the Services which spring from so ignoble a Principle; even this Fear (I say) of Punishment, and Dread of the Divine Wrath, if it is not indeed the *highest and noblest* Principle of Obedience, yet it is undoubtedly a *very just and reasonable* Motive to it; If it is not indeed the most *excellent* Pitch of Virtue, yet it is at least a very *proper Beginning* of it; If it is not indeed a *Part* of the most *exalted* Love of God; and Love when it is become *perfect*, casteth out Fear; yet it is at least very consistent with its whole *Progress* in *this* Life, and a necessary Part of that *Regard* towards God, which is due to him from us as our Supreme Governor. And since God himself has given it us as a Motive to Obedience, the Obedience cannot be unacceptable to him, which proceeds from that Motive. Fear is one of the natural Passions which God has implanted in our Souls; and our Saviour does not command us to root it out, but only to direct it towards its right Object; *Fear him, who is able to destroy both Soul and Body in Hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him.* The Laws of God are inforced in every part of Scripture, by *Threatnings* as well as by *Promises*; and the Apostles thought fit to perswade men by the *Terrors of the Lord*, as well as by the gentler Motives of his *Love and Compassion*. Vain Suspicions therefore, that our Obedience proceeds not from a right Principle, from a true and unfeigned Love of God; are by no means any just Occasion for Uneasiness of Mind; provided always that we make but sure of the thing itself, that we sincerely perform that Obedience, by a Life of Virtue and True Holiness.

3*dly*;

3*dly*; A *Third* Cauſe of Trouble of Mind to melancholy pious Perſons, is an Apprehenſion that poſſibly they may be excluded from Mercy, by ſome *poſitive Decree* and Fore-appointment of God. From *Nature* and *Reaſon*, This Apprehenſion cannot ariſe; becauſe it is abſolutely contrary to all our natural Notions of the Divine Attributes, to conceive that the infinitely merciful and good God, whoſe tender Mercies are over all his Works, ſhould for his own pleaſure, and not for any Wickedneſs of theirs, eternally decree any of his Creatures to be miſerable. Neither in *Scripture* indeed, any more than in the Reaſon of Things, (but only in the Writings of ſome unskilful Interpreters) is there *Any* Foundation for any ſuch Apprehenſion. For ſuppoſing there *be* ſome few obſcure Texts, which unſtable Perſons may be apt to miſinterpret to their own and others Diſquiet; yet, Is it not fit that the whole *Tenour*, the whole *Deſign* and perpetual *Aim* of Scripture, ſhould be the Interpreter of particular paſſages? And is not this the whole *Current* of Scripture from one End to the other, to declare, that *Far be it from God, that he ſhould do Wickedneſs; and from the Almighty, that he ſhould commit iniquity; For the Work of a man ſhall he render unto him, and cauſe every man to find according to his ways*? that the *Judge of all the Earth, will do what is right*? that *he will render to every man according to what he has done, whether it be good or evil*? that *with righteouſneſs ſhall he judge the World, and the people with equity*? that *God made not Death, neither has he pleaſure in the Deſtruction of the Living*? And if this *were not* the whole Tenour of Scripture; yet, Is it not undeniable, that the particular Texts, which ſpeak after this manner, are infinitely *clearer and plainer*, and leſs poſſible to be miſapplied, than thoſe which are imagined to look the contrary way? Does not God ſwear by himſelf; *As I live, ſaith the Lord, I have no pleaſure in the Death of him that dieth, but rather that he ſhould turn from his Ways and live*? Does not the Apoſtle St. *Peter* declare, that God is *not willing that* any *periſh, but that all ſhould come to Repentance*? and St. *Paul*; that God *would have* all *men to be ſaved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth*? And is it not fit that theſe *plain* Texts which cannot be miſtaken, ſhould be the Rule by which the *obſcurer* ones are to be interpreted; rather than that the *obſcurer* places ſhould cauſe the *plain* ones, to be perverted or neglected? And yet indeed even the *obſcure* ones, are not ſo much ſo in *themſelves*, as by *our* want of attending to their true meaning. The ix*th* chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Romans*, which has ſometimes perplexed the Minds of well-meaning Perſons, was by all Chriſtians in the firſt Ages without difficulty, and is Now again by all rational men, who attend to the Scope of the Apoſtle's Argument, more than to the Schemes of mens own inventing, clearly underſtood to be written, not concerning God's chooſing ſome *particular perſons*, and rejecting others from *eternal Salvation*, but concerning his rejecting the *nation* of the *Jews*, and receiving in the Gentiles to be partakers of the *benefits of the Goſpel*: And the *elect* there ſpoken of, are the *whole Chriſtian Church*, whereof *all* nevertheleſs do not attain unto Salvation; and the *reprobate* there mentioned, are the *whole Nation* of the unbelieving *Jews*, whereof *all* nevertheleſs were not finally caſt off: And where God's fore-determination of *particular Perſons* is ſpoken of, it is not a fore-appointment to eternal Happineſs or Miſery, but always to ſome *temporal* Office or Advantage only. Thus of *Jacob and Eſau* it was determined, before either of them was born, or had done either good or evil; that the purpoſe of God according to election might ſtand, it was determined, what? only that the Elder ſhould be Servant to the Younger. And when it was fore-appointed that our Saviour ſhould be betrayed; it was likewiſe fore-appointed, not that *Judas* ſhould betray him, but that our Lord ſhould chuſe on purpoſe into the number of his Apoſtles one ſuch Perſon as *Judas*, whoſe own Wickedneſs he ſaw would make him a proper Inſtrument of accompliſhing that Deſign. And when St. *Paul* asks, *Who maketh thee to differ from another*? he does not ſpeak of *moral* Diſpoſitions, but of *miraculous Qualifications* for *Offices and Dignities* in the Church; as is evident from the Context. And when God hardened *Pharaoh*'s heart, it was not that God originally made him Wicked; but his own obſtinate Wickedneſs made him worthy to be judicially hardened, and a fit perſon to be raiſed up by Providence for the manifeſtation of God's Glory in his exemplary Deſtruction. It is evident therefore there is no Ground in Scripture, for any pious perſon, to apprehend that poſſibly he may be excluded from Mercy, by any poſitive Decree or Fore-appointment of God.

4*thly*,

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4*thly*, Another Cauſe of Uneaſineſs in the Minds of ſome melancholy pious Perſons, is a Fear of having committed *the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt*. And theſe may be ſatisfied, by conſidering, that there is no ſuch thing at all mentioned in Scripture as the *Sin* againſt the Holy Ghoſt, but only the *Blaſphemy* againſt the Holy Ghoſt; And *That* was, ſuch a *reviling* the greateſt of our Saviour's Miracles, as to aſcribe them to the *Devil*; And This, by thoſe that *ſaw* them with their *own Eyes*, and who conſequently could have no greater Conviction, no new means offered them, to bring them to Repentance; And theſe very Perſons were declared unpardonable, not upon account of the ſingle *Act* itſelf of Blaſpheming, but becauſe *ſuch* Blaſphemy in *ſuch* perſons in *ſuch* Circumſtances, was an evident and certain Sign of an *incurably wicked and malicious Diſpoſition*; As appears from the Words immediately following thoſe which declared the Phariſees unpardonable, St. *Matt.* xii. 33; *Either make the Tree good, and his Fruit good; or elſe make the tree corrupt, and his Fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by his Fruit: O Generation of Vipers, how can ye, being evil, ſpeak good things!* From all which it ſufficiently appears, how impoſſible it is for any truly *ſincere* and *well-meaning* perſon to be guilty of This Malignity, or to have any reaſon of apprehending he can poſſibly have fallen into it.

5*thly*, The next Cauſe of Trouble, to the Minds of ſome pious and melancholy perſons, are *Wicked and Blaſphemous Thoughts*; which becauſe they cannot but deteſt and abhor, therefore they are apt to imagine them to be very ſinful; and the more ſinful they think them, and the more they are afraid of them, the more apt they are to return. Now in reality, for this very reaſon, becauſe they deteſt and abhor them, and are afraid of them, and cannot avoid them; for this very reaſon (I ſay) ſo far are they from being great and crying Sins, or Tendencies towards the Blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt, that in reality they are not ſo much as any Sin at all, but merely Weakneſſes of Imagination ariſing from Infirmity of Body; and, if they be of any moral Conſideration, they are on the contrary rather, by the Uneaſineſs which they cauſe, certain Signs of a tender Conſcience and of a pious diſpoſed Mind. For profligate and profane Perſons, are not diſturbed at ſuch things as theſe. The proper Remedy, (next to the curing the Bodily Diſorder,) is, to conſider the true Nature of Sin; that all Sin lies in the *Will* only; and conſequently *thoſe* Thoughts only can be ſinful Thoughts, which are either Deſigns and Contrivances of Wickedneſs, or at leaſt which take ſome Pleaſure and Delight in the Imagination of it. But theſe which offer themſelves involuntarily to the Imagination, not only without any Delight, but with Abhorrence and Deteſtation; can no more be any Sin in the Perſon whom they diſturb, than one man's accidentally ſeeing another's Wickedneſs or hearing his Blaſphemy, can be Sin in the Perſon that hears or ſees it. God himſelf ſees and hears all the Wickedneſs that is done in the World; and yet it diminiſhes nothing from his infinite Purity. And could melancholy pious perſons once perſwade themſelves, that Thoughts, which they do not chuſe, are (in the moral Senſe) not their own, and that they are to be ſlighted and neglected accordingly; this in all probability would ſoon effectually cure them and prevent their return; for the ſame reaſon, as too much Fear and Dread of them, naturally cauſes them to be almoſt always preſent.

Laſtly; The laſt uſual Cauſe of Trouble of Mind, is the Conſcience of *paſt* great Sins, and of *preſent* remaining Infirmities. Now if by *Infirmities*, be meant ſuch as are unavoidable; and, if not perfectly unavoidable, yet ſuch as are always incident even to good men; and always ſincerely ſtriven againſt; and generally Omiſſions rather than Commiſſions; theſe are conſtantly allowed for in the whole Tenour of the Goſpel, and the Forgiveneſs of them annexed to our daily Prayers. But if by *Infirmities* be meant *plain Tranſgreſſions* of God's Commands, and manifeſt Sins willingly choſen upon the offer of a Temptation; theſe are and ought to be ſuch a Trouble of Mind, as nothing but effectual Repentance and Amendment can remove. Which Amendment when it has really taken place; then the Sorrow for what is paſt, may reaſonably be relieved by the Aſſurance of Pardon. For though the great and principal Promiſe of Pardon, is made indeed to Unbelievers at their Converſion and being baptized; yet there is alſo ſufficient encouragement given, even to relapſing Sinners to repent. *Brethren*, ſaith St. *James*, *If any of you do err from the Truth, and one converteth him, Let him know, that he which converteth*

converteth the Sinner from the Error of his Way, ſhall ſave a Soul from Death, and ſhall hide a Multitude of Sins: And our Saviour threatens ſome very corrupt Chriſtians, *Rev.* ii. 21; that becauſe he *gave them ſpace to repent* and they *repented not*, therefore he would *caſt them into a bed* of Sickneſs, *and kill their children with Death*; yet ſtill adding, *except they repent of their deeds*. And St. *Paul*, having ſeverely puniſhed a very wicked perſon among the *Corinthians*, yet at length writes to *forgive and comfort him, leſt perhaps he ſhould be ſwallowed up with overmuch Sorrow*. And the Texts which ſeem to ſpeak otherwiſe, yet have not really a different meaning. For when the Apoſtle ſays, it is *impoſſible for them that fall away*, to be *renewed* to *Repentance*; he does not mean to take away the Comfort of true Repentance, but to expreſs the difficulty of bringing Apoſtates *to* ſuch Repentance. And when he ſays *there remains no more Sacrifice for Sin*, he does not mean that true Penitents ſhall not be forgiven; but that thoſe who by Apoſtacy *reject* the Sacrifice of Chriſt, can expect no *new* Sacrifice to be inſtituted for them. And when he ſays that profane *Eſau found no place for Repentance, though he ſought it carefully with Tears*; his meaning is This only, that the vain Sorrow and Prayers of Men continuing Wicked, (for he calls him profane,) ſhall not move God to repent and reverſe their Sentence. And when St. *John* ſpeaks of *a Sin unto Death*, he does not mean that repentance cannot remedy it; but that ſome Sinners are as unlikely to *repent*, as ſome Diſeaſes of Body are unlikely to be *cured*. SERM. LXXXVII.

I ſhall conclude with this one practical conſideration. If, where there is *no* real ground for trouble of Spirit, yet the mere Phantom of a deluded Imagination can be ſo terrible as men ſometimes find it; *What* then is the *reality* of God's inſupportable Wrath, lying upon the mind of an impenitent and deſpairing Sinner! Therefore take heed of real and habitual Wickedneſs.

SERMON LXXXVIII.

Of publickly Denouncing Curſes upon Sinners.

DEUT. xxvii. 26.

Curſed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this Law to do them; And all the people ſhall ſay, Amen.

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THE Proper Deſign and Uſe of all publick or private Seaſons of Humiliation, is, to recollect and examine carefully the State of our Lives; to confeſs our paſt Sins, with a juſt Senſe of our own unworthineſs in committing them; humbly to ask pardon of God, for the breaches of his Law we have been guilty of; to imprint upon our Minds a deep Senſe, of the reaſonableneſs and obligation of our Duty; to acknowledge the Juſtice and Righteouſneſs of God's indignation, denounced againſt impenitent Sinners; and to form within our ſelves ſtrong and ſolemn Reſolutions, of better Obedience for the future. To this end it is, that the Law of God is held forth unto us, recommended with all the Bleſſings, and fenced in with all the Curſes that are written in his Book.

Book. To this end it is, that the Prophets in the *Old Teſtament*, and the Apoſtles in the *New*, repreſent unto us in ſuch ſublime expreſſions, the Happineſs of Obedience; and on the other hand ſet forth in ſuch moving and affectionate deſcriptions, the wrath of God expreſly revealed from Heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of Men. To this end it is, that our Saviour has appointed his Miniſters to continue, even unto the End of the World, perſwading men to Repentance both by the Love of God, and by the Terrors of the Lord. Which as it is at all Times their perpetual Duty, ſo more eſpecially at ſuch Seaſons as are thought proper to be ſet apart for Faſting and Humiliation. The proper and Chriſtian Obſervation of which Times, does not conſiſt in ſuperſtitious Diſtinctions of Meats, for which there is no foundation either in the Law of God or in the nature of things; but it conſiſts in ſuch general Abſtinence, as every ſerious perſon finds by his own Experience beſt to promote the performance of his whole Chriſtian Duty. In which matter, becauſe the Temper and Conſtitution and other accidental circumſtances of every particular perſon, are different from Others; therefore no general Rules can be given for all perſons; but every one for himſelf muſt in particular, with the Prudence and Sobriety of a Chriſtian, determine the Meaſure and Degrees of that Abſtinence, which the Law of God *has not* determined, and the Laws or Cuſtoms of Men have in Reaſon *no Power* to determine. But *ſome things* there are, very proper for *all perſons*, and wherein the *whole* Church may join without diſtinction: Such are, confeſſions of Sin, publick acknowledgments of the righteouſneſs of God's Laws, and ſolemn Deprecations of his Judgments. Which Acts of Devotion, as they are *always* proper; So it has wiſely been judged, that the performing them with greater *Solemnity*, at certain periods or ſeaſons ſet apart for publick Humiliation; may be very advantagious and helpful, towards the keeping up a publick Spirit of Religion in a Nation. And there was the more reaſon ſo to judge, becauſe God himſelf, when he brought the Children of *Iſrael* over *Jordan*, was pleaſed by an expreſs Command to appoint the Bleſſings and Curſes of the Law to be read in a ſolemn manner to the whole Body of the People; and that the People, at the repeating of each Curſe, ſhould, by way of *acknowledgment* of the *righteouſneſs and reaſonableneſs* of God's Judgments denounced againſt impenitent Sinners, diſtinctly and ſolemnly ſay, *Amen*. Of This we have a large account, in this xxviith Chapter of the Book of *Deuteronomy*; in which, from the 15*th* verſe to the End, is ſet down a diſtinct Denunciation of the Curſe or Wrath of God, againſt ſeveral *particular* Inſtances of great Wickedneſs; and it concludes or ſums up all with that more *general* Denunciation in the words of the Text, *Curſed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this Law to do them; and all the People ſhall ſay, Amen*. In diſcourſing upon which words; becauſe they have ſometimes by weak perſons been ſo miſunderſtood, as if by joining with or repeating this Curſe, Men were in danger of being led into ſome degree of uncharitable Cenſure, or to expreſs any hard Wiſh, againſt ſuch perſons as they know to be guilty, or whom they ſee live in the practice of any of thoſe Crimes to which the Curſe is here annexed: I ſhall therefore endeavour to ſhow, 1*ſt*, That the repeating the Curſe in this and the like Texts, is not expreſſing any uncharitable *Wiſh*, or *deſiring* that any Evil ſhould befal the Perſons againſt whom it is denounced; but only an *acknowledgment* of the *Reaſonableneſs* of God's denouncing ſuch Threatnings in order to bring men to Repentance, and a *confeſſion* of the *Juſtice and Righteouſneſs of God* in puniſhing ſuch as (notwithſtanding thoſe Threatnings) continue obſtinately impenitent: And 2*dly*, I ſhall endeavour to ſhow, That this publick acknowledgment of the Righteouſneſs of God's Judgments upon impenitent Sinners, is very *reaſonable* to be *made in this manner* by all Chriſtians.

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I. *Firſt*; I am to ſhow, that the repeating the Curſe in this and the like Texts, is not expreſſing any uncharitable *Wiſh*, or *deſiring* that any Evil ſhould befal the perſons againſt whom it is denounced; but only an *acknowledgment* of the *Reaſonableneſs* of God's denouncing ſuch Threatnings in order to bring men to Repentance, and a *confeſſion* of the *Juſtice and Righteouſneſs of God* in puniſhing ſuch as (notwithſtanding thoſe Threatnings) continue obſtinately impenitent. And This will appear, both by a careful conſideration of the words of the Text it ſelf; and

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by comparing them with other expreſſions in Scripture, of the like import and ſignification. In the words of the Text it ſelf, *Curſed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this Law to do them; and all the people ſhall ſay, Amen*; it is obſervable in the firſt place, that in the very firſt expreſſion, *Curſed* be *he*, the word, *be*, is not in the original; and, for that reaſon, in our *Engliſh* Tranſlation is printed in a different character: So that the words might *as* truly, and indeed *more* truly, have been rendred, *Curſed* is *he*, or *Curſed* ſhall be *He, that confirmeth not all the words of this Law to do them.* Which is manifeſtly, not an expreſſion of *Deſire*, in him that pronounceth the words; but merely a declaration of *Truth*, that the Wrath of God *is* actually revealed againſt Sinners. And it is remarkable, that theſe very Words are expreſly quoted by St. *Paul* from this paſſage in *Deuteronomy*, according to *that latter* manner of Rendring; *Gal.* iii. 10; *As many*, ſays he, *as are of the Works of the Law*, Are *under the curſe*; *For it is written, Curſed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.*

In the next place; the ſame thing appears from the uſe of the following word, *confirm*; *that* confirmeth *not all the words of the Law to do them.* For as He who *Obeys* the Commandments of God, does not add thereby any Strength to the Law it ſelf; but yet is ſaid in the Text to *confirm* it, only by *aſſenting* to the reaſonableneſs of it in his *life and practice*: ſo He who *pronounceth* Thoſe accurſed, whom the Law of God hath expreſly condemned; doth neither thereby take upon himſelf any *Power* of paſſing cenſure on his brethren; neither doth he expreſs any *Wiſh or Deſire* of his own; but only makes *confeſſion* of the Juſtice and Righteouſneſs of God, in declaring his indignation againſt Sinners.

Laſtly; As to the following words, *and all the people ſhall ſay, Amen*; it is to be obſerved, that this phraſe has in Scripture *two* Significations. At the concluſion of *Prayers and Thankſgivings*, it ſignifies a *Wiſh* or *Deſire*, *So be it*: But when it is added to an *Aſſertion* or *Declaration* of *Truth*, it ſignifies only an *Acknowledgment* of the *Truth and Certainty* of what is ſo declared. Thus when our Saviour uſes the word, *Amen, Amen*; as he does ſo frequently in St. *John*'s Goſpel, it plainly ſignifies, as we rightly tranſlate it, Verily, Verily, *I ſay unto you*; that is, the words which I ſpeak, ſhall *certainly and aſſuredly* be accompliſhed. And when St. *Paul* tells us, 2 *Cor.* i. 20, that *all the Promiſes of God, in Him, are* Yea *and* Amen; his meaning is evident, that they are ſure, infallible, and to be entirely depended upon. And when our Saviour declares concerning himſelf, *Rev.* i. 18; *Behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen*; it is manifeſt, the word, [*Amen*,] does not there expreſs any *Wiſh* or *Deſire*, (which would have been very improper in That place;) but it is a ſtrong *aſſertion* of the infallibility of That Truth, that he is *alive for evermore.* And the Character by which the Spirit deſcribes him, *Rev.* iii. 14; *theſe things ſaith the* Amen, is diſtinctly explained in the words next following, *the faithful and true Witneſs.* From theſe Uſes of the word, *Amen*, in Scripture; it appears very clearly, that if the *former* part of the Text be rendred (as it may well be) not, *curſed* be *he*, but, *curſed* is *he, that confirmeth not all the words of This Law to do them*; the meaning of the *latter* part, *and let all the people ſay, Amen*, will be *This* only; let the people publickly profeſs their acquieſcence in, and acknowledgment of, the Juſtice and Righteouſneſs of the divine Threatnings. And *This* Senſe of the words is the more certain, becauſe in the Book of *Jeremy*, where the words of the Text are again repeated, *Curſed be*, (or, Curſed *is*) *the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant*, Jer. xi. 3; the Prophet immediately replies, *ver.* 5, *Then anſwered I, and ſaid*, Amen, *O Lord*; Which Reply being made by him of his own accord, and without any Command; ſhows plainly that the word, [*Amen*,] ought not there to have been rendred, as in the form of a ſevere condemnatory Prayer, *So be it*; but as a form of acquieſcence only in God's righteous Sentence, *Even ſo, O Lord, Righteous and True* are *thy judgments.*

And thus much, from the conſideration of the expreſſions uſed in the *Text it ſelf.* The ſame thing will appear further, by comparing theſe with other *ways of ſpeaking* uſed in Scripture, of the *like* import and ſignification. In the laſt words that *Jacob* ſpake to his Sons, *Gen.* xlix, we find This expreſſion concern-

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ing *Simeon and Levi*, ver. 7, *Curſed be their Anger, for it was fierce; and their Wrath, for it was cruel.* It cannot be imagined that *Jacob* intended to *curſe* his Sons, or bring any *imprecation* upon them, as of his own Deſire; but the words are only a declaration of what he was inſpired to foreſee *would* come upon them hereafter: And therefore in the very ſame verſe he changes his Style, and goes on in the Prophetick manner of ſpeaking; not, do Thou *divide them*, but, *I* will (ſays he) *divide them in Jacob, and ſcatter them in Iſrael.* And This, (eſpecially if we conſider that it was to take place, not ſo much in *Themſelves* as in their *Poſterity*,) leads us to the true explication of thoſe many Paſſages in the *Pſalms*, which in our *Tranſlation* ſeem to be expreſſed in the form of Curſes or Imprecations, but in the *Original* are plain Predictions only of future Events. To give One inſtance out of Many: *Pſ.* civ. 8; *Let his days be few, and let another take his Office; Let his children be fatherleſs, and his Wife a Widow.* Theſe words being ſpoken by the Pſalmiſt, not as a *private* perſon, concerning his own particular Enemies, but as a *Prophet* concerning Him who was to betray our Lord; are plainly, not an *imprecation*, but a *prediction:* And almoſt all the like expreſſions in the whole Book of *Pſalms*, carry with them ſufficient Marks, of their being intended only as prophetical denunciations of the Wrath of God, againſt prophane Men and Enemies of Religion in all future Generations. Again: *Deut.* xxvii. 12; When *Moſes* commanded ſix of the Tribes to ſtand upon Mount *Gerizim* to *bleſs the people*, it is added in the next verſe that the other ſix ſhould ſtand upon Mount *Ebal* to *curſe:* He does not continue to ſpeak in the ſame phraſe, that as the one were to *bleſs the* people, ſo the other ſhould *curſe the* people; but only that they ſhould ſtand upon *Mount Ebal* to *curſe*; that is, to publiſh aloud the denunciations of God's Wrath againſt Sinners, and the Threatnings of what calamities *Would* certainly befal that nation if they departed from God. And This is what *Moſes himſelf* often did in a more vehement manner and with more ſolemn words, than when it was expreſſed barely in the form of a Curſe: *Deut.* iv. 25; *When you ſhall corrupt your ſelves, and do evil in the Sight of the Lord thy God, to provoke him to Anger; I call* Heaven and Earth *to witneſs againſt you this day, that ye ſhall ſoon utterly periſh from off the land:* and *ch.* viii. 19; *If thou forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other Gods, I* teſtify *againſt you this day, that ye ſhall ſurely periſh.* From this form of expreſſion, which is really much *more* vehement and emphatical, than that in the Text, and yet manifeſtly contains nothing of *imprecation* in it, but merely a *warning* to deter men from Apoſtacy; it is evident that the words of the Text, though expreſſed in the form of an imprecation, yet muſt of neceſſity be underſtood in no other ſenſe, than as a *like warning* to deter men from Sin. And This is the more evident, becauſe both from the places now cited, and from the whole *Book of Deuteronomy*, it appears, that all the Curſes in that Book were denounced not only againſt wicked perſons *then preſent*, but alſo in all *ſucceeding generations*; with reſpect to whom, it is plain they could be underſtood no otherwiſe, than as *comminatory Exhortations.* For as the Apoſtle declares concerning the *Bleſſing*, Acts ii. 39; that the Promiſe was to *Them* and to *their Children*, and to them that are *afar off, even as many as the Lord our God ſhall call*; ſo *Moſes* expreſly declares concerning the *Curſe* likewiſe, (*Deut.* xxix. 14, 15, 19; and iv. 25;) *Neither with* you only *do I make this covenant and this Oath; But with him that ſtandeth here with us this day, and alſo with him that is* not *here with us this day*; For *when thou ſhalt beget children, and childrens children, and ſhalt have remained long in the land*; and *it come to paſs that* one *heareth the words of this Curſe*, and deſpiſeth it; *the Lord will not ſpare that man*, but *all the Curſes that are written in this book ſhall lie upon him.* The Meaning is evident: If any man deſpiſes the *Threatnings* of God, inſtead of being moved by them to Repentance; upon *Him* ſhall thoſe Threatnings finally be executed.

In the *New Teſtament* likewiſe, we ſometimes meet with the ſame manner of ſpeaking. *Rom.* ii. 8, 9; *Unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs; Indignation and Wrath: Tribulation and Anguiſh upon every Soul of Man that doth evil, of the Jew firſt, and alſo of the Gentile.* In the *original*, it is expreſſed as an entire Sentence of it ſelf, *Indignation and Wrath* be *upon them:* But yet, from the whole ſcope of St. *Paul*'s diſcourſe, it is plain his intention

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was nothing more, than as if he had only in one continued Sentence gone on with the fore-going declaratory manner of ſpeaking; *God* will *render to every man according to his deeds; To them that patiently continue in well-doing, eternal life; but to them that obey unrighteouſneſs, indignation and wrath.*

The Apoſtles were intruſted by our Saviour, with the Doctrine of Life and Death; with delivering to men the Terms, upon which their Sins ſhould be forgiven or not forgiven; *Whoſeſoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whoſeſoever Sins ye retain, they are retained:* Yet when they *retained* any mens Sins, as in the caſe of ſhaking off the *duſt of their feet* againſt the unbelieving Cities; it is plain they did it not as an Act of *Power*, nor as a Signification of any *Will or Deſire of their own*, that thoſe people ſhould be accurſed; but, as our Saviour himſelf expreſſes it, *Mar.* vi. 11; it was to be *for a* Teſtimony *againſt them*, a *Proteſtation* of their unworthineſs to receive the Goſpel: juſt as *Moſes teſtified* againſt the children of *Iſrael* in the paſſages before-cited; and as St. *Paul* againſt certain wicked perſons among the *Theſſalonians*, 1 *Ep.* iv. 6; *The Lord is the avenger of all ſuch; as we have alſo fore-warned you, and* teſtified; and as St. *John*, againſt any man that ſhould corrupt his Prophecies in the Revelation, *ch.* xxii. 18; I teſtify, ſaith he, unto every ſuch perſon, that *God ſhall add unto him the plagues that are written in this Book.* From all theſe parallel paſſages it abundantly appears, that the ſolemnly repeating the Curſe in the Text, or any other the like denunciations in Scripture, is not expreſſing any uncharitable *Wiſh*, or *deſiring* that any Evil ſhould befal the perſons againſt whom it is denounced; but only an *acknowledgment* of the *Reaſonableneſs* of God's denouncing ſuch Threatnings in order to bring men to Repentance, and a *confeſſion* of the *Juſtice and Righteouſneſs of God* in puniſhing ſuch as (notwithſtanding thoſe Threatnings) continue obſtinately impenitent. It remains that I proceed to ſhow briefly in the

II. *Second* Place, that ſuch a publick acknowledgment of the Righteouſneſs of God's Judgments upon impenitent Sinners, is very *reaſonable* to be *made in this manner* by all Chriſtians. And This is extremely evident from what has been already ſaid. For ſince reciting the Curſes written in Scripture, is not *wiſhing* or *deſiring* any Evil to any man; but the reaſon of *continuing* to recite them, is only the ſame as the reaſon of God's *firſt commanding* them to be written; namely, to move both thoſe that *hear* them, to repent; and to convince thoſe that *recite* them, of the neceſſity of avoiding thoſe Crimes, againſt which they acknowledge with their own Mouths the Curſe of God to be due; it is very plain, that this is not doing *Hurt*, but *Good*, to our Neighbours; being indeed nothing elſe, than *fore-warning* them of a Danger, in order to their *eſcaping* it. The *righteouſneſs* of the Law of God, is atteſted to by the natural Senſe of every man's own conſcience; even *the Gentiles which have* not *the Law*, being *a Law unto themſelves, and ſhowing the work of the Law written in their hearts.* The *judgment of God* therefore, *againſt them who commit ſuch things* as their own conſciences condemn, *is according to* Truth, *Rom.* ii. 2; that is, it is according to *Right and Equity*; as the Phraſe is afterwards explained, *ver.* 5; where it is ſtiled more expreſly *the revelation of the* righteous *judgment of God: Righteous*, in condemning *thoſe only*, who muſt by all men be confeſſed to be worthy *of Death*; (as St. *Paul* expreſſes it,) *Rom.* i. 32; *who knowing the judgment of God*, (in the original, *the* juſt *judgment of God*,) *that they who commit ſuch things are* worthy *of death, not only do the ſame, but have pleaſure in them that do them*; or, (as it is found in ſome of the moſt ancient Copies,) *who knowing the righteous judgment of God, yet do not conſider, that they who do ſuch things are* worthy *of Death, and not only They that do them themſelves, but they alſo who countenance others that do them.* Now what the *Equity of the Thing it ſelf* thus compels every man's conſcience ſecretly to acknowledge within him, the *Glory of God and the Benefit of Men* make it reaſonable ſhould be publickly profeſſed before the World; that God *may be juſtified in his ſaying, and clear when he is judged*, (Pſ. li. 4;) and that *Men* may be moved to Repent, by conſidering that, if they do it not, they will have no Apology to make for themſelves, but *every mouth will be ſtopped before God*, Rom. iii. 19; and at the day of judgment it will be ſaid to every impenitent perſon, *Thine own Mouth condemneth thee, and not I, yea thine own lips teſtify againſt thee*; Job xv. 6. Not that by making ſuch Profeſſion, any man ſhall be more

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liable to be condemned, than if he made it not; but that the righteouſneſs of God's Judgment ſhall be manifeſted in condemning men for *ſuch* things *only*, as either they themſelves profeſſed, or (which is the ſame thing) could not deny, to be worthy *of Death*. By which Phraſe, being worthy of *Death*, it is not to be underſtood only, that ſuch Crimes *may* be ſo puniſhed *without any Injuſtice*; but alſo that it is *neceſſary*, in the government of the World, that they *ſhould be* ſo puniſhed. *God himſelf* therefore, the infinitely good and merciful Governor of the Univerſe, pronounces Curſes againſt the wicked, not as taking any *Delight* ſo to do; but the Scripture always repreſents him doing it, as *unwillingly*, as with *reluctance*, and as his *ſtrange Work*; Iſaiah xxviii. 21. And our *Saviour* alſo *himſelf*, who loved us, and gave himſelf for us, and laid down his own Life to redeem us from Death; yet even *He* ſhall ſay, to thoſe who impenitently reject his gracious Offers of Life, *Depart from me, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels*; Matt. xxv. 41. And, *in the preſence of the Holy Angels, and in the preſence of the Lamb*, who aſſuredly can take no pleaſure in beholding any Puniſhment but what is neceſſary, *ſhall they be tormented with Fire and Brimſtone*; Rev. xiv. 10. And the *Saints in Heaven*, who are far from having in them any Revenge, or any Uncharitableneſs, but only a right Senſe of the *neceſſary* adminiſtration of Juſtice in God's Kingdom, are deſcribed after the following manner, *Rev.* xix. 1; *I heard a great voice of much people in Heaven, ſaying, Allelujah, Salvation and Glory and Honour and Power unto the Lord our Lord; For* true and righteous *are his judgments; for he hath judged the great Whore, which did corrupt the Earth with her fornication; and hath avenged the Blood of his Servants at her hand*: And again, (*ch.* xvi. 5) *I heard the Angel of the Waters ſay, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and waſt, and ſhalt be, becauſe thou haſt judged thus; For they have ſhed the blood of Saints and Prophets, and thou haſt given them blood to drink, for they are* worthy; *And I heard another out of the altar ſay, even ſo, Lord God Almighty*, true and righteous *are thy judgments.* The Senſe of all theſe places is nothing elſe, but that it is reaſonable all the World ſhould make acknowledgment of the Righteouſneſs of God's judgments; and of the neceſſity there is in the nature of Things, and in the Government of God, that Wickedneſs ſhould finally be deſtroyed. And though it be in great Variety of Expreſſion, that the Scripture ſets forth this Truth; yet by comparing the ſeveral Expreſſions one with another, it is plain they all terminate only in the ſame thing. What *Solomon* thus expreſſes, *Prov.* xvii. 15; *He that juſtifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the juſt, they Both are an abomination to the Lord*; is in the Prophet *Iſaiah* thus, *ch.* v, 23; Wo unto them *which juſtify the wicked, and take away the righteouſneſs of the righteous from him:* And Prov. xxiv. 24; in a ſtill more *ſevere* manner of ſpeaking, *He that ſaith unto the wicked thou art righteous, him ſhall the* people curſe, nations *ſhall abhor him.* Yet the meaning of all theſe places, is ſtill evidently One and the ſame; And the Nations *curſing* ſuch a perſon, plainly ſignifies nothing more, than an univerſal acknowledgment of the Reaſonableneſs and Neceſſity of the Threatnings denounced of God againſt him. In the Book of *Habakkuk*, the figure is carried ſtill higher, *ch.* ii. 11, 12; The very Stone *ſhall cry out of the Wall, and the* beam *out of the Timber ſhall anſwer it*; *Wo to Him that buildeth a Town with Blood, and ſtabliſheth a City by iniquity:* And in that pathetical Expreſſion of our Saviour, *Luke* xix. 40; *If theſe ſhould hold their peace, the* Stones *would immediately cry out:* It is a highly figurative and very elegant manner, of expreſſing only the *Reaſonableneſs and Neceſſity* of the Thing to be done. And becauſe the Deſign and End of *All* theſe ways of ſpeaking in Scripture, is *This* only, to convince men of the neceſſity of coming to Repentance, of reforming their manners, and of obeying the Law of God; it is therefore very evident, that as ſhowing men the Penalties threatned in *human Laws*, is a kind and friendly office, as only giving them *warning* in what manner to *avoid* them; ſo reciting, with the ſame intention, the *Curſes of God* ſet forth in Scripture againſt all impenitent Sinners, is likewiſe doing, not *Hurt*, but *Good*, to our Neighbours.

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The only *Inference* I ſhall draw at this Time from what has been ſaid, and wherewith I ſhall conclude, is This; that if, when the *general* Denunciations of the Wrath of God againſt Sinners are recited, there be and ought to be a great Tenderneſs uſed in applying them *in particular*; and the Deſign of repeating them publickly

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publickly upon ſolemn occaſions of Humiliation, is, that every man may apply them ſeriouſly to his *own* conſcience, and not that any man ſhould judge his *Brother*; (For *who art Thou that judgeſt another man's Servant? To his own Maſter he ſtandeth or falleth:*) From hence we may learn the extreme Wickedneſs of Thoſe mens *pretended Catholick Religion*, who preſumptuouſly taking it for granted, that All who receive not their abſurd Doctrines, ſhall be eternally puniſhed by God; take upon them to anticipate that unrighteous Sentence, which they profanely paſs in the Seat of God; and deſtroy mens *Bodies* for no other Reaſon, but becauſe they have firſt with impious and antichriſtian Uncharitableneſs preſumed to give judgment of condemnation againſt their *Souls*. *Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her Sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues; For in her is found the blood of Prophets and of Saints, and of all that are ſlain upon the Earth.*

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